FREEDOM IS NOW

Roy Eugene Davis

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I salute the supreme teacher, the Truth,
whose nature is bliss, who is the giver
of the highest happiness, who is pure
wisdom, who is beyond all qualities and
infinite like the sky, who is beyond words,
who is one and eternal, pure and still,
who is beyond all change and phenomena
and who is the silent witness to all our
thoughts and emotions–I salute Truth,
the supreme teacher.

– Ancient Vedic Hymn

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WITH GOD We CAN!
Conscious Immortality

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FOREWORD

The usefulness of the printed word in our fast-changing world is evident from the response we see to it. Words either written or spoken, if imbued with the conscious awareness of the author, serve as vehicles for the transmission of deeper intent. Because of this a phrase shared or an idea prompted can result in soul awakening and direct insight on the part of the person involved. It is to this end I share this material.

Freedom, in the soul sense, means release from all previous restrictions. This kind of freedom is the new awareness which sets one loose from all that once was a bond or a limitation. This is the potential experience for all souls and is the basic call-to-awakening offered to us by the masters and seers of the ages.

The book you now hold in your hands is designed for a great outreach to muliplied thousands of seekers on the path. First issued as articles and lessons for students and co-workers, we are pleased to present this book to you. Share it with your friends after you have exhausted its potential for you. Share your enlightened Self with your friends and associates once you have experienced the Greater Life.

God is the reality of all we see and deeply experience. From this level of understanding I invite your conscious involvement as you contemplate the following pages. God *as* me consciously acknowledges God *as* you.

Roy Eugene Davis
Lakemont, Georgia, U.S.A.

"Every living thing, from the smallest organism to man, is moving in the direction of fulfillment and completion."

Chapter 1

TOTAL FULFILLMENT is the ULTIMATE DESTINED EXPERIENCE for EVERY PERSON

There are certain laws of nature which, if understood and worked with, will create for each person an ideal situation in which the influence of God can be naturally expressed. None of us can violate any law of nature, for violation is resistance to what is natural. Some can transcend lower laws and live from a higher and superior level of understanding, but this will be easily revealed in one's life-experience. At every level of nature there are laws which, if acknowledged, result in freedom of expression at that level. For instance, if one is at the level of natural law, one will be wise to abide by the rules of correct food selection, the natural cycles of rest and activity, the cause-and-effect relationship between service and income, and the need to be appropriate to social observances in order to maintain open, clear, and useful relationships.

The highest fulfillment is fulfillment in God. When the soul awakens from its temporary "sleep" and consciously lives in harmony with God's will, the purpose for human incarnation is served. No person can miss fulfillment in God because each one of us is a ray of God, playing our current role in the drama of life. Most people also have a destiny which relates to living in this world. That is, God

as the soul wants to do certain things as part of the world-transformation process. Here is a question for each of us: "What does God want to do through and as us?" We can sometimes gain a glimpse of insight regarding this question by calmly analyzing our innate abilities, talents, and tendencies in the direction of the highest good. We all know our inner abilities and the talents that we have, even if we sometimes do not fully utilize them. We all have an inner aspiration which we know is the soul's urge to express most fully. Almost all people also know that they are not presently using the abilities that they have. Perhaps fear of failure prevents us from attempting to reach our goals, perhaps laziness and procrastination restrict us, or perhaps we have allowed ourselves to become trapped in a routine situation.

Even while flowing with our destined life-plan we can, if we are aware, make our personal contribution to how our lives go and what our relationships are. We do have a considerable degree of freedom of personal choice. We can choose each day between being optimistic or being pessimistic; between responding appropriately to what unfolds about us or reacting unwisely; between paying attention to duties or shirking our responsibilities. We can decide what we are going to eat, how we are going to structure our day, when we are going to study and meditate, and how much time and attention to give to various projects. We can decide whether we are going to be centered and conscious or whether we are going to be an unstable victim of subconscious conditionings.

Affirmations: What They Are and How to Use Them Wisely

Affirmations for useful change have been taught for centuries by great spiritual teachers. When we use an affirmation we are not to think that we are conditioning the subconscious level of mind. Affirmations can be used in this manner, of course, but this is not the highest

purpose to which their use can be put. Affirmations can be tools we use to direct our attention to that which is *true*. In this way, when we use an affirmation, we are actually reminding ourselves of *what can be*, so that we can awaken to the conscious awareness of it.

If one is faced with illness and all of the evidence *proves* the claim, as pronounced by experts who have been trained, one can either fall into line with what is prescribed or one can change the situation. It may well be that the advice we are given is correct and useful to our present need; we may be well-advised to eat more wisely, rest more completely, or learn to rid our nervous system of stress. God's direction also flows through various doctors and counselors. If, however, one is confronted with a very negative opinion which one does not want to accept, one can turn to the Source and be free to follow inner guidance and common sense procedures. Always, we work from the level of knowing that God can do anything because God is manifesting as the world and God is directing the entire drama. I frequently assert, "With God We Can! " because I feel this to be true. You will notice that in this assertion (which is the same as one of our book titles) I have, purposely, insisted upon "We" because, as long as we are involved with the relative worlds, it will always be "us" and God. When we transcend relativity, we will no longer be playing a role with overtones of being separate.

When using an affirmation, contemplate the meaning of the words and affirm in a quiet manner, gradually feeling that what is affirmed is true. An affirmation, correctly used, is a tool to enable us to experience a change in viewpoint, a change in feeling and a change in realization. The key to success with affirmations is to experience the change desired and then live from that new state of consciousness.

After correct use of an affirmation one must *be* the person one has affirmed to be. If we do not experience a change in self-image and a change in feeling and knowing, we have not used the affirmation to the fullest extent

possible. Continue with the affirmation of your choice until you feel a definite change in attitude and feeling. We can be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The mind needs only to be de-conditioned in order for the light of the soul to flow without restriction.

A useful time to use affirmations is after meditation. Upon coming out of meditation, rest for a while in the relaxed feeling of self-completeness and then gently affirm that which is true from the spiritual level of understanding. That is, do not affirm "I will be," affirm "*I am spiritually fulfilled, I am mentally and emotionally clear, I am physically healthy, I am in open communication with others and my world, I am prospered now through God's grace.*" Rest for a few moments after positive affirmation and rejoice in the feeling of release. Rejoice in the experience of gratitude and freedom in God you are experiencing.

Whenever, during the day, you are tempted to sink into unwanted mental and emotional states, pause for a moment and bring yourself back to the knowing and the feeling that all is well. With practice we can remain calm and centered even in the midst of challenge and outer confusion. Even if others speak in terms of limitation, we can inwardly remain clear and know that what they say is not true for us.

Correct Self-Understanding and Attention to Daily Routine and Duty as a Way to Conscious Soul-Awareness, Always

Even when we are conscious that we are working to change our conditioned nature and when we are conscious of challenges and problems, we can train ourselves to inwardly remain aware of the truth: "Pure Consciousness is my nature." Something from deep within reponds to this reminder; this something is the life-energy of the soul which awakens and begins to circulate when acknowledged. Therefore, correct Self-understanding is the first key to success on the spiritual path. With correct Self-understand-

ing we automatically are self-confident, and we are possessed of a sense of inner security because we know we are anchored in the Infinite. Working as best we can from the level of understanding of being a body or a personality will enable us to experience a measure of fulfillment; working from the level of understanding that we are Life-giving beings will insure true spiritual fulfillment or completion. One who is outwardly successful as a result of personality-effort will still feel, at times, that something is missing. This "something" is the conscious realization of one's true relationship with God.

My guru used to say that everyone is seeking a relationship with the Infinite even if this questing is not consciously known. True happiness is experienced when we see through the appearances of this shadow-world and comprehend the total picture from the viewpoint of God. One experiences the fulfillment of spiritual destiny when total knowledge is constant. One need not literally leave the world in order to be spiritually free, one can be free while embodied if the understanding is perfect. We know how free we are and how perfect our understanding is by being aware of how open we are to the natural flow of life through us and around us. We know whether we are living with limitations or if we are free.

How well, for instance, do we handle our daily relationships and our daily duties? Inner understanding will be reflected in outer behavior; therefore we have an accurate indication with which to measure our understanding. Do we get along harmoniously with members of our family and with members of our community? Do we get along harmoniously with those with whom we work? Do we handle routine duties with ease and dispatch? Are we punctual in keeping appointments? Are we gracious and courteous in our dealings with others? Are we really making a contribution to our world or are we just getting by? Do we really know that the flow of Infinite energy is the source and reality of our supply, or do we think in terms of limitation and lack? We have only to be self-honest and

observant to know exactly what our spiritual condition is and from where we view our world.

Here are some areas to examine:

1. *Spiritual Health* – Let us see to attention to needed disciplines, to regular inspirational reading, and to daily in-depth meditation experience. Spiritual health precedes everything else.

2. *Mental Health* – Let us see to the clearing of unwanted patterns from the mind and to conscious creative use of the mind. Included in this process is attention to mental attitude, constructive use of visualization, and regulation of our mental conversations.

3. *Emotional Health* – By remaining calm and centered, by seeing everything in correct perspective, by refusing to allow destructive feelings to dominate us, we learn in time to enjoy and appreciate relationships without clinging and without fear of assuming responsibility for relationships. Any feelings of fear, anxiety, self-pity, regret, shame, guilt, jealousy, resentment, and strong dislike can be dismissed from our feeling nature. Cheerfulness, optimism, love, and respect actually contribute to the healthy functioning of our glands and body organs. Negative emotions contribute to changes in body chemistry and can result in sickness and disease.

4. *Physical Health* – To each according to his need, in this respect, in relationship to personal attention to diet, exercise, and rest. If our eating habits are not the most useful, now can be the time to change our pattern. If we have been putting off a needed exercise plan, now can be the time to begin. If we have been straining and neglecting rest, now can be the time to relax and to make more constructive use of our time and energy.

5. *Economic Health* – Are we possessed of clear understanding in this matter of our relationship with things? Do we really understand that the world about us is formed of the energy of God and that this energy does not increase nor does it decrease, that it merely changes form? Are we realistic in the handling of money and other

resources which have been given into our keeping? Are we rendering a service for the money we earn or are we just putting in time for a paycheck? Do we feel that we are restricted to what we can earn in exchange for the giving of our time and energy, or do we realize that Life can fulfill itself through ways and means that we cannot possibly humanly imagine? Two keys to a prosperity consciousness are: one, to be open to the flow of Life; two, render true service according to ability and talent.

We live in harmony with a Universal Mind which expresses as forms (things). This is how God appears in and as the world. Does God know anything of lack or limitation? No, God is forever expressing and forever presenting Himself in a variety of ways. It is the innate urge of the soul to express freely and to participate in a variety of ways without restriction. Why, then, the seeming restrictions? Because of the conditionings of the mind and because of rigid habits of the personality. When mental conditionings are cleared and when rigid habit patterns are neutralized, we can then flow with life as we were meant to flow. It is not so much a matter of "working at it" as it is to relax and be open to the natural tendency of Life to fulfill intended purposes.

Sometimes our environmental circumstances reinforce our sense of limitation. Haven't we all experienced the sense of release and freedom that naturally occurs when leaving behind the problems and challenges of a home environment, while on vacation or on a business trip, for instance? And, haven't we sometimes felt a sense of heaviness overcome us as we returned to the environment where we know challenge awaits? What we sometimes forget is that the world is fluid and that conditions and circumstances are subject to change. But, by endowing conditions and circumstances with power, we put ourselves in a position where we are subject to outer appearances. In reality, appearances are subject to us and only a little experimentation will prove this if one is courageous (or curious) enough to test the theory.

For instance, take that situation which seems to be such a great challenge and, for the fun of it, practice a little creative imagination. Pretend that the situation has no power over you. Assume that God is the only power. In your mind's eye, picture yourself free of the pressure of the condition. Feel free and inwardly rejoice, with a sense of gratitude, because you are now free. You see, it does not take any outer change to enable us to adjust our own mental attitude and to alter our state of consciousness. As a result of this inner change, the condition may simply cease to be important and may fade away. Or you may be able to handle creatively what needs to be handled to change the condition. We begin with ourselves first, realizing that inner change precedes outer change. If we affirm that conditions, circumstances, people and trends are the cause of our unhappiness or appearance of limitation, we are putting ourselves in the role of the victim.

We can ask ourselves, "Do I want to be a victim or shall I be the master?" Through mastery of self we find that our world responds to our state of consciousness. We do not have to prove that we can control other people or that we can control the energies in nature. When we are established in the clear understanding of who we are and what our relationship to God is, the outer picture will conform to our experience in consciousness. This is the secret taught through the ages: that man, by altering his mental attitude and by adjusting his state of consciousness, can see a useful change in his personal circumstances. We always attract to ourselves that which is in harmony with our state of consciousness. It is done unto us according to our belief, according to our mental acceptance. This is the creative law of mind and consciousness and is a principle available for anyone to use. We never use God, we use the principle in order to bring ourselves into a harmonious relationship with God.

How Do We Truly Know God's Will?

The urge of God is to awaken and express more clearly through nature. Therefore, whatever we do which contributes to this awakening and expression can be considered to be in harmony with God's will. If the mental attitude we maintain, the relationships we experience, and the work that we do contribute to the welfare of all living beings, this can be considered to be in harmony with God's will. We often read of how enlightened masters were concerned with the welfare of animals and with every expression of nature.

Can we imagine how it might be to experience heaven on earth? The heavenly condition is the fulfilled condition, the condition resulting from completion. After eons of soul-struggle, we awaken to know the truth about life and then, as a result of our realization, all about us we see fulfillment. As we continue on the spiritual path we also work for and with others by seeing the Christ-nature of every person and of every animate creature. At the inmost center of every living form there is that divine essence which is enlivened by the Christ Consciousness, made vital by the Intelligence of God. It is not that we are seeing to fulfillment for ourselves only, for as we see to our perfect understanding we are making an important contribution to life itself.

Let us know clearly:

"As a spiritual being, made in the image and likeness of God, I now joyfully participate with the flow of life. I now fully accept my personal responsibility to attend to useful matters which contribute to my own conscious awareness and to the orderly transformation of my world."

"All worlds and all people and manifestations in all worlds are sustained by the Spirit of God."
– Bhavagad-Gita

Chapter 2

LIVING IN HARMONY with a BENEVOLENT and FULLY RESPONSIVE UNIVERSE

All of the great spiritual teachers of the ages speak of God as *good* and supportive and willing to be responsive to man's needs. We often need to be reminded that God is not distant from his manifest universe but that God is actually expressing *as* the universe. God is, therefore, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent . . . . God is everywhere present, God is fully conscious of all that transpires in and as the universe, and God is the only power. The One Power expresses as diverse energy-frequencies, but all expressions of energy are aspects of God-energy.

There is No Independent Universe and There is No Individual Person

Since the universe is an expression of the outflowing energy of God, it cannot be independent of the source. Since souls are viewpoints of God there is no individual person. While identified with mind and body the soul may assume a sense of separate existence, but this is due to lack of conscious understanding. This lack of conscious understanding is referred to, in New Thought terms, as *error*.

When we are in error we miss the point because we are lacking true understanding. Some seers refer to error as delusion or darkness. When one is in error, when one is deluded, when one is in the darkness of human confusion, the general thought about human existence is that one is a material being involved with an indifferent world with which one must struggle in order to survive and get ahead. Let us read from the New Testament of the *Holy Bible*, from *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter 7, verses 7 to 11:*

> *Ask, and it shall be given unto you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*
>
> *For everyone that asketh receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*
>
> *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*
>
> *If ye then, being evil (in error), know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

Jesus obviously experienced an open relationship with God and he referred to God as Father. A father cares for his own. God cares for Himself as us because God is expressing as us. In some religious teachings God is also referred to as Mother because it is understood that God has dual characteristics; the father aspect is the regulating and controlling power; the mother aspect is expressing in and as all of nature. God is possessed of positive and negative electrical characteristics and, in our universe, we see these

characteristics manifest as male and female. Since God is the cause of the world process, we then determine that God is the Supreme Parent . . . and in relative expression performs as Father-Mother. Some saints speak of God as a personal friend. Yogananda used to lead us in public prayer and opened the prayer with: "Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, Friend, Beloved God . . . ." God as Father is the controlling principle of the universe. God as Mother is the benevolent and supportive aspect. From the interaction of positive and negative electric characteristics, the worlds were born, just as from the interaction between male and female, children are born.

We affirm that we are made in the image and likeness of God because we are, essentially, Pure Consciousness endowed with electric attributes . . . just as God is Pure Consciousness endowed with electric attributes. God and souls have within their respective natures: the thrust toward the Absolute (Transcendental Awareness), the trend toward inertia and heaviness (which makes possible world manifestation, as well as influences the soul in the direction of material contact), and the experience of activity and motion (which contributes to the move in the direction of fulfilling intended purposes). It requires a degree of discernment to understand these subtle characteristics in nature, but once they are understood the entire Cosmic Play is seen for what it is. The universe is a *Play of Consciousness* as an almost infinite variety of energy-interactions contribute to the process. And here we are, involved in the midst of what is unfolding, and we are as special and as unique as any other expression. The reason for our special and unique relationship is that *God is manifesting as everything as well as all relationships.*

One reason for the benevolent nature of the universe is that Life is supportive of all organisms and growing things. Life is emerging through forms (animals, people, vegetation, etc.), and, as long as a living thing is in harmony with its environment, the vital forces of nature will flow and express. When we are in harmony with our world, the

intelligent and creative life within us tends to express as a fulfilling influence. There are two major influences at work in the universe. One influence is the urge of Life to *express as nature* and as souls who have a mission in the relative realms; the abundent life is the ideal life for one who lives consciously in harmony with natural law. The other influence is the *withdrawing movement* of Life which makes possible the dissolution of forms which are no longer useful in the evolutionary plan. This influence also contributes to assist souls who have completed their earth-life purpose and whose goal it is to awaken from relative relationships and return consciously to a permanent experience in the transcendental aspect of God.

This matter of soul destiny is not always clearly acknowledged. One frequently meets with a person who is strongly into goal-setting and into living fully in this world, and such a one will assert that his way is the way for all people: that we were all meant to create, to build and to be outwardly successful. At another time one may meet with a person whose destiny it is to be more inwardly involved; such a person may be more philosophical and even seemingly preoccupied with exploring inner levels of mind and consciousness. There are some people who will return to this realm time and time again because this is their destiny. There are others who will play out their role this time around and, after transition, never return to the material level of the universe. Some of the latter souls will continue experience on astral or mental planes for a duration, and some will awaken completely from identification with the manifest realms and rest in God-consciousness forever. Unless we can see clearly what one's destiny is, we should not judge a person's inclinations and direction in life. But, of course, there are misdirected persons in both of the aforementioned situations. Some people are so strongly outgoing that they seldom take time for prayer and reflection. They live almost entirely through the senses and become totally caught up in material consciousness. There are some people who are more introspective and are

afraid to get into involvement with the world even when duty calls for such involvement. In the opening chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Arjuna represents a person who knows what his duty is but who is unwilling to confront it. After considerable discussion Krishna instructs his disciple, Arjuna: "Now, being reminded of your duty, you should not hesitate to act. There exists no greater opportunity for good than to become creatively involved with pressing issues." (Chapter Two: Verse 31)

Man's Mind is a Bubble in the Ocean of God's Mind

No matter how various are the expressions of the ocean, all expressions are still basically ocean in nature and character. God's Mind is the great universal ocean of mind-substance in which all creation is taking place. Man's mind is a bubble of this ocean of mind-substance. This is why we can work in harmony with the universal process. Not only does the urge of God (in the direction of outer expression) result in urges and thoughts surfacing in man's mind, but, also, man's creative intentions influence Universal Mind to some extent, and Universal Mind is responsive to man's desires and mental pictures.

We can sit quietly, after meditation, and be open to inner guidance. From the soul level, inner understanding seems to float to the surface of the mind. Also when we contemplate the purpose of our lives in relationship to God's creative plan for the world, we obtain insight and direction. The world is moving in the direction of transformation and enlightenment; therefore, if what we think, feel, and do is in harmony with this trend, we can experience fulfillment and happiness because we are flowing with the natural inclination of Life. If we are in a boat on a river which is flowing in the direction of our intended destination, it takes very little effort on our part to eventually arrive at the destination. We may have to steer clear of rough waters and obvious danger areas, but, overall,

the journey will be swift and smooth. Life is like this when we are in harmony with the creative process.

Sometimes our lives can be successful and problem-free if we will but avoid obvious problems. We have all said, "I know better but I do not always do better." We may know better than to spend too much time with people who are negative and purposeless, but we may continue to mingle with them. We may know of the importance of study and meditation, but we may procrastinate and put study and meditation practice off until a later time. We may know that we should be more generous with our plan of sharing, but sloth or fear keeps us in bondage.

One of the major errors is for one to assert, "I intend to become creatively involved with life, but I'll do it later when I'm more spiritually advanced or when I'm wealthier." The secret of fulfilled living is to begin *immediately* to express according to one's means and abilities. As we become involved we become more able, more understanding and stronger because we are obtaining actual experience. It is only by living fully that we can know the principles of creative expression. There are hundreds of thousands of "armchair" truth students who read books and literature but seldom put into practice what they learn. Likewise, there are many who partially understand the reality of God but who do not enter into prayer and meditation with total surrender in order to experience God. At the deepest level, at the soul level, God *is*. We do not have to struggle to "find" God, we have but to relax the body and still the mind in order for the light of the soul to be self-evident. At times a person will tell me, "I have been searching sincerely and frantically for years, but the experience of God seems to elude me!" A sincere quest is recommended, a frantic quest is definitely not recommended.

Various "mental science" teachers have been sharing practical guidelines to more creative living for several decades in America. This teaching emphasis has been extremely helpful in encouraging people to rise free from traditional

and restricting mental attitudes and to break from a pattern of working merely to survive. The hundreds of Unity Centers, Science of Mind Churches, and the many independent New Thought groups are making an invaluable contribution to millions of people. It may be common knowledge to us that an adjustment in mental attitude and an intentional change in the direction of positive visualization can result in useful change in our lives and in order in our environment, but these principles are unknown to millions of people around the world. It may be easily accepted by us that we are essentially divine beings, but millions of people are either thinking in terms of being a body, only, or wondering "if they have a soul."

Even long-time truth students have not, in most instances, even begun to explore their true potential. Some truth students are content if they are able to improve their lot in life up to the point of being free from stress and worry. Others are content just to be a little more healthy or a little more prosperous. Few think in terms of true freedom, of unbounded awareness, and of cosmic consciousness. True freedom results in God-realization. Unbounded awareness is experienced when no more restrictions exist at any level of the mind, when the entire range of the mental field (superconscious, conscious, subconscious and unconscious) is *conscious* and *cleared* of restricting impressions. Cosmic consciousness is experienced when we know a unity with all life. In the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna, through his Yoga power, reveals the truth to Arjuna so that the disciple sees and knows:

> *In the body of Consciousness I see all the gods (celestial beings) and every other manifestation as well: God, the many spirits before the throne (the influential energies of God) and the powers and forces in nature. I see these as infinite in number and it seems (to me) there is no end. I see the radiance of Consciousness, as a flaming fire. I see Reality which*

is imperishable and as That which is to be realized (by unaware souls). I see Consciousness as the original Being. The spaces between heaven and earth (the subtle and gross realms) are pervaded by Consciousness. I perceive that bands of enlightened ones merge in Consciousness with a sense of reverence. All worlds and all people and all manifestations in all worlds are sustained by the Spirit of God, even as I am. As moths rush into the fire, to there be consumed, so do all souls (eventually) rush to spiritual awareness and lose their sense of separate existence (and awaken to everlasting life).

It is very useful for us to extend ourselves a bit and to test the principles with which we work. We do not seek personal power, but we do seek freedom and understanding through conscious cooperation with the forces in nature. If we do not put ourselves on the line and enter into a disciplined involvement with God, our lives will have no challenge and we will miss the point of having taken birth in our world.

A Personal Project for Creative Living and Experience

If you are aware that you require more experience with the creative laws of mind, in harmony with God-mind, then why not initiate a personal project in order to more fully enter into conscious participation? If there is need for improvement in your life, you will especially want to enter fully into this project. Even if your life is reasonably well-ordered, I would still recommend participation for your own experience and to more fully expand your awareness and unfold your true soul potential.

1. *Define your Goal* – Whatever it is you want to establish as your personal project, *write it down*. Your goal may be to permanently change your mental attitude so that you are optimistic at all times. Your goal may be to

improve your efficiency in matters of work or creative endeavor. Perhaps you would like to see yourself as a more prosperous person, happy in relationships, or perhaps you need more vitality and good health. Perhaps you are at a time of crisis in your life or you want to experiment on a minor unimportant matter just to test the principle. It does not matter, as long as your goal is realistic and in harmony with natural law. God does not know anything of limitation. Once you are clear about your intended goal or experience, *write it down.*

2. *Twice a Day After Meditation* – We always meditate to experience our nature as Being. We never take problems or goals into meditation. Meditation is our occasion to rest in God awareness. *After* meditation, remain in a quiet and relaxed mood. Visualize and *feel with every atom of your being* that your goal is now a reality. Do not, at this time, think about how to go about causing effects. Rest in the knowing and in the feeling that your goal is now an established reality. The keys to success are *visualization* and *feeling.*

3. *Emerge from Your Practice Session* – Emerge from your practice session *knowing* and *feeling* that your goal is now reached, your desire is now fulfilled. Maintain this *knowing* and this *feeling* throughout the day. Absolutely refuse to give in to the temptation to doubt or be concerned. Regular practice sessions will reinforce the positive and desirable mental images and feeling patterns. You may be inspired to initiate positive and constructive action. Or, if no such inspiration comes, you can surrender to Life, knowing that God has ways of unfolding that man cannot possibly imagine.

Remember, Life is responsive to our requests and especially to our needs. In fact, if we are open and trusting, if we are totally surrendered to life and completely responsible, Life will fulfill Its purposes through us and around us without our having to take any conscious thought. Plants flourish, seasons come and go, life continues on the planet, because the urge to express is the

motive force behind all outer appearances. In due time one learns to intuitively know when one should initiate action, when one should enter into a creative mental exercise, and when to relax and let Life unfold as It wants to.

If you are new at working with this concept and if you sometimes doubt the outcome of your prayer or visualization project, then try it on something small and unimportant to begin with, in order to acquire experience. Say, for instance, you would like to have some new furniture and your budget seems not to presently allow for it. Or you would like to take a modest vacation trip but money is limited and time cannot be arranged. As long as your inner work does not inconvenience anyone else, go ahead and experiment. Expect nothing of another person, expect only from Life. Then, practice visualization and constructive feeling and see what happens!

Here is something you can do to reinforce your practice: if you can find pictures in magazines or newspapers which represent your idealized experience, then clip them out and put them where you can constantly see them . . . on the bathroom mirror or on the wall near where you work and attend to daily duties. As you see these pictures your mental field will accept and retain them and, before long, such pictures in the mind will externalize as objective realities. Some New Thought teachers refer to this process as "treasure mapping" because you are first planting the mental seeds of that which you will soon experience.

Surround yourself with elevating things which will reinforce your intention to change your consciousness. Make your environment attractive, with flowers and decorative items, whatever is in tune with your mood and desire for your highest good. Throw out all of the rubbish and unwanted items in your environment. Put order into your personal world and schedule your time and energy. Create an attractive meditation nook in your home, if this can be done without causing conflict with other members of the family. Have a photograph or two of a saint or some

person who, to you, represents the highest spiritual ideal. When we arrange our environment to match the ideal we have for ourselves, we then tend to measure up to it. The ideal environment is also reinforcement to the mind. There is a more subtle influence which is not usually understood: by creating the ideal environment for ourselves, we *invite into our lives energies of a higher frequency*, which flow to us from the inner realms.

Carolyn and I have photographs of masters and saints all about our home. There is not a room into which one can walk without a photograph or two which serves as a connecting link with finer realms. Our line of gurus grace the top of my bookshelf, Satya Sai Baba's photo is in several rooms, Sister Dayamata looks at us from a prominent place in the living room, Yogananda and other masters surround us (through their photos) wherever we move in our home. In the Meditation Hall there are large and attractively framed photographs of scenic areas, and of Dr. Taniguchi and other highly realized souls. There is never, in any sense, the idea of idol worship: a photograph is but a photograph . . . but useful photographs and pictures can plant constructive seeds in the soil of the mind and these seeds will bear fruit in due time. Some self-proclaimed "realists" would have us believe that only the ugly and sordid side of life is "real" and deserving of our attention. The "ugly" and the "sordid" is also God-energy expressing, but it is influenced by inertia (*tamas guna*) and does not represent the pure and perfect ideal. I have "mildly" argued, for years, with newspaper editors and radio-TV newscasters about their choice of what is really news. They almost uniformly tell me that they give the public what it wants. They offer shocking news because it compels the attention of the public. Many people, mired in traditional consciousness, seem to relish news of disaster and hardship (or haven't you noticed?) because this is their level of understanding and their level of survival. We have a choice: we can watch the news programs with a spirit of quiet objectivity, we can read the news publications and

screen out the useful material . . . or we can ignore the entire effort. I, personally, watch everything and read everything . . . with interest and mild detachment. I know that no matter how challenging an event seems to be, there is a Power greater than all outer appearances that will eventually set matters right. Often, the Power requests our assistance in setting matters right, and we have to know how best to respond to inner impulse and outer need.

Here is an affirmation to use on a daily basis, until the full realization of the ideal is permanent in mind and consciousness:

> *"I am a Life-giving spirit, made in the image and likeness of God. I am now living in harmony with a benevolent and fully responsive universe. I rejoice in the freedom which results from this clear understanding."*

"The direct approach to spiritual freedom is to renounce everything that prevents soul-realization."

Chapter 3

A DIRECT APPROACH to SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

We have all wondered, at times, "What must I do to experience spiritual freedom?" We may have been observing most of the prescribed things which are taught by the master teachers, and, yet, something is lacking. What is lacking? That "something" is total commitment.

We often go just so far in the direction of total commitment and then hold back. Perhaps we feel, in our human sense, that if we give our ourselves "almost" totally, this will be sufficient. Well, the scriptures declare that partial surrender is less than useful as far as our experiencing the goal of life. Let us turn to *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Chapter 10) and read verse 17 onwards. "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus told the man to observe the commandments. The man said that he had observed them from his youth. Jesus then gave specific instruction for this individual: "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross (responsibility) and follow me." That is,

follow the way of Christ Consciousness, which is free of petty human considerations. We are told the man was "sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

The clue to the man's problem is found in the words of Jesus, in verse 24: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" The key word here is "trust." Elsewhere in the *Gospels* we learn that Jesus demonstrated prosperity and freedom and that he did not advocate a life of poverty. In the above teaching incident he was attempting to educate a seeker on the path about the importance of not being totally dependent upon things.

One who is attached to things tends to cling to them and tends to think of material possessions as security, instead of realizing that God-awareness is the real security. We are told that one who renounces attachment to things actually has access to everything needed. Attachment results in fear and small-mindedness. In the Yoga scriptures it is taught that one who renounces (not one who rejects relationships) attachments actually experiences that all good flows to him. Wanting nothing, everything comes to hand.

Some who read the scriptures here quoted make the mistake of assuming that Jesus was suggesting a life of poverty, but this is not the case. He was merely giving precise instruction in an individual instance. They had already declared that he had been observing the other rules and regulations. Jesus pointed out the one area in the man's life which had been neglected. Had the man been a responsible steward of his possessions, while neglecting another vital area of his life, Jesus would have undoubtedly pointed out something else: such as the need for honoring one's parents or the need for honesty.

Spiritual Freedom Results from Total Surrender

When I am asked, as I was recently, "What can one do

to make the fastest progress on the spiritual path?" I only respond: "Give up all non-essentials and concentrate on the essentials." Most of us are aware enough to know where our weaknesses lie. Most of us know what we should do. We know if we are persisting in negative thinking and useless actions. We know if we are wasting time. We know when we are playing personality-games. We also know when we are not giving enough time and attention to meditation and when we are not settled into a routine of study and intentional involvement with life. We do not have to have a master come along to tell us what we should be doing. As we read the scriptures and as we search our inmost feelings and thoughts, we know how we are doing on the path and what must be done to rid ourselves of restricting influences. We sometimes think that if an enlightened person were to sit down with us and give us personal instruction, somehow the way would become more clear and the awakening experience easier. It is true that to be in the presence of a saint can elevate us and motivate us. Still, we are the ones who must make needed inner changes. We are the ones who are responsible for doing what we can to allow soul expression. The kingdom of heaven is a state of consciousness. It is the experience of unbounded awareness, the conscious awareness of our full potential. How can we experience the conscious awareness of our full potential when we persist in behavior which is inconsistent with spiritual freedom? How can we expect to experience liberation of consciousness while we remain in bondage to self-defeating attitudes, feelings, and relationships?

We cannot be healthy as long as we indulge in thoughts, feelings, and eating habits which are destructive. We cannot be prosperous as long as we maintain an attitude of limitation and refuse to enter into open relationships with life. We cannot enjoy meaningful human interaction as long as we remain self-centered and defensive:

1. *Health* – God, through Universal Mind, controls and regulates the universe on all levels, from light realms to the material worlds. Soul force, through the medium of human

mind, influences the physical body, down to the most subtle levels. When we harbor negative thoughts, when we indulge in destructive emotions and feelings, the flow of soul force is disturbed and physical irregularities result. It is well known that the majority of physical ailments have their origin in mental and emotional levels. Some physical problems, of course, are the result of accidents, inherited tendencies, and waste products having been accumulated in the system. Injury as a result of accidents can be healed, inherited tendencies can be neutralized, and the body can be cleansed of toxic matter. Physical problems resulting from these three causes are the easiest to handle. More subtle is teaching people how to take responsibility for their thinking and feeling habits. Today, as a result of research, many physicians are helping patients to help themselves by educating them to consciously regulate mental attitudes, thoughts and feelings. If one is possessed of a healthy self-image one will automatically be inclined in the direction of health and creative living. If one is responsible for regulating thought patterns and mental attitudes one is moving in the direction of mastery. If one will release the past and release destructive emotions (fear, guilt, regret, envy, etc.), one will experience joyous release, a sense of increased vitality and a renewed interest in present-time and future-time living. Often there is need for mental education. We are not here referring to mind conditioning but to certain practices which will erase destructive mental conditionings. Creative visualization through controlled imagination techniques is one positive way to educate the mind to greater possibilities. A useful occasion to practice such creative visualization methods is after meditation, before fully emerging from the practice. While resting in the in-between state (between meditation experience and full sense awareness), one can rest quietly and inwardly visualize and know: "I am a radiant being, made in the image and likeness of God. I now take full responsibility for my thoughts, for my mental attitude, and for my view of my world. I now accept mental clarity,

emotional freedom, and total responsibility for my actions and relationships. I am now in harmony with the Power that regulates my universe." After knowing in this manner we should sit quietly for a few minutes and allow the realization to infiltrate every cell of our body. Responsible action extends to our choice of diet, our choice of friends and acquaintances, our choice as to how best to use our time and energy. We are here referring to being fully conscious and fully responsible for every waking moment. The spiritual life is not a part-time process, it is a matter of total involvement. If we are not totally involved in a conscious manner, it may be that one day we will hear a still, small voice within us reminding, "There is one thing lacking . . . ."

2. *Prosperity* – Why is it, when Life is forever moving in the direction of fulfillment, that so many are obviously not prospering? This subject is so close to most Truth students that I will reserve a more complete examination of it for later in this treatise. The major reason for the experience of limitation is lack of understanding of the principles involved in the process of Life-fulfillment. But let us leave this topic for a few moments and pick it up again.

3. *Meaningful Human Relationships* – Some people, in spite of the obvious fact that they are surrounded with supportive friends, still feel a sense of being alone They either cannot accept the idea that others really like them or they do not know how to relate to other people in an open and honest manner. We all know people who really want to be involved in human relationships, but they almost always ruin the possibility because of not knowing how to respond, not knowing what to say or do, or because they say or do the wrong thing at the wrong time. We also know people who are too involved with personality . . . that is, they are relating only on the surface level. (On the other hand, there are many who seem to get along very well as a result of relating on a superficial level, but they do not experience real and meaningful relationships.) One

problem, for many people, is that they are frantically looking for a human connection in order to derive a sense of security. If one will first establish a relationship with God, then all outer relationships will unfold in perfect order. This "perfect order" will not always be in accord with traditional thinking. If we are strongly involved with family consciousness or the rightness of blood relationships or racial or cultural ties, we can sometimes be misled. Again, Jesus taught a most radical ideal (Read *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Chapter 3, verses 31-35.) Jesus had been talking to those gathered about him and was told that his mother and brothers had arrived. Jesus said, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" Then, turning to those assembled with him he said: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

Enlightened people are respectful of their family connections, but they are not bound to the thinking patterns of family members or relatives who are involved in material consciousness. Our *true family*, when we are spiritually awakened, is made up of others who are on the enlightenment path and who are in attunement with us. The *true church*, in the Christian tradition, is not really a congregation of people with mixed thoughts and goals. The *true church* is made up of all who are in harmony with Christ Consciousness. When we are fully conscious we no longer remain in bondage to traditional thinking. Let us read from *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (5:17), "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." To "be in Christ" is to be Christ Conscious. An aspect of soul is that of conscious intelligence and this is Christ Consciousness. When we awaken to this level of soul awareness we are no longer of the world. We are no longer bound to traditional concepts and relationships. This cannot be explained to one who is still relating to the conditionings of the mind (to what one has been *taught* to believe). Being honest, appropriate, and fair in all

relationships, one moves through the world with inner understanding. This is the way of an enlightened person.

Overcoming Inborn Tendencies

The major purpose of spiritual disciplines is to neutralize restricting tendencies which keep the soul from expressing in total freedom. All of us have thought patterns which are the result of our educational experience in this incarnation. We grow up and, if we are not alert, we acquire the attitudes and opinions of those with whom we live. Many people think in a self-limiting fashion because this is what they learned from others. Many think in terms of poverty or survival-level living because this is what they have always known. Very few people know how to eat correcly. Hardly anyone, who has not studied independently, understands the true nature of God. But we do not have to remain victims of our early training. We can change what needs to be changed once we are partially awakened and once we have made a decision to learn the ideal way to live. Sometimes we find ourselves seemingly controlled by habits which are not useful. How do we break an unwanted habit? How do we become free from our addictions?

Depending upon our state of consciousness (our degree of conscious awareness), habits can be overcome either slowly or quickly. For some people the gradual way is most useful because the subconscious level of mind cannot immediately adapt to sudden change, even when we know at the conscious mind level that change is needed. In an ancient Indian text, the *Charak Samhita*, it is written: "By degrees the wise man should free himself of unwholesome habits; also, by degrees he should develop wholesome ones. The acquisition of the new good habits and the giving-up of the old bad ones should be achieved by regular quarter-steps of decrease at orderly intervals of one, two, and three days." What is here suggested is the conscious and intentional replacement of unwanted habits

by desirable ones. This approach is suited to some people, but it can also result in too much effort to overcome unwanted habits. If it is a useful process for a person, one should use it.

Joel S. Goldsmith told his students of an experience he had during his years as a businessman. This was before his active work as a truth teacher. He went to a Christian Science practitioner for prayer treatment for a chronic cold. The practitioner sat in the silence with him and shared the truth that the real person (the soul) is not addicted to anything and is not capable of limitation. The next day, so Joel reported, he found that he had lost his inclination to drink alcohol, even in moderate amounts. He also no longer was inclined to play cards or to indulge in other socially acceptable but unnecessary activities.

There are also accounts of persons who have experienced sudden spiritual awakening (or "conversion") and were literally reborn into a new and more elevating state of consciousness. As a result, they were released from all restricting habits and raised to a new level of freedom and understanding.

One key to success in overcoming habits is not to struggle with them. If we fight a habit we give it power that it really does not, in itself, possess. Things have no power over us. Inclinations have no power over us. Tendencies have no power over us. It is we who accept limitation. On a visit to Japan, Carolyn and I were having dinner with a small group of representatives of the Seicho-No-Ie organization in Tokyo. Mr. Wada, one of the directors of the movement, gave his testimony. He said that he had once been a heavy smoker but he no longer smoked. His explanation was: "I made friends with tobacco and found that I could do without it." His comment perfectly explains a simple truth: when we cease to consider anything as an enemy it no longer has power over us. Therefore, one way to handle an addiction is to realize that it is not good and it is not bad, it is just another thing or condition with which we have become entangled. When we can put things

in a neutral perspective we can choose whether or not to relate to them. The decision is then ours without our having to exercise will and without our having to struggle. We can then simply let go and be free. We can come into the place in understanding where we no longer judge anything as right or wrong; we simply decide what is most useful in our individual case.

I occasionally receive letters from people who ask me how to overcome the craving to eat too much of the foods which contribute to overweight. One young man, who was very slim, told me he was a "foodaholic" and was forever eating. He said that he thought it was because he felt unloved and that by eating he was proving his love for himself. Some psychologists have written papers in which they point out that a degree of stimulation and satisfaction is experienced as a result of putting food into the mouth. Mild stimulation of the senses is pleasurable, to be sure. Some people are addicted to music. Others are addicted to touch. Sexual connection is often sought, not for the purpose of a relationship, but because it "feels good." The pleasurable feeling resulting from eating, relating, communicating with the environment, sexual intercourse, breathing, etc., has a survival value. We are inclined, unless we are self-destructive, in the direction of experiences which are pleasurable. When we are healthy it is sheer pleasure to breathe clean air, to consume fresh food, and to communicate through the senses with our external environment. This is nature's plan for our getting along in this world. It is only when a sense experience becomes an obsession, an addiction, that we become trapped and limited.

Over-eating of unwholesome foods is often rooted in a sense of insecurity. Sometimes it is due to chemical imbalance in the body, which can be corrected by diet and psychological evaluation. Sometimes there is a basic negative self-image (one does not like himself) and, therefore, contrives to punish the body and move in the direction of destruction of the body. Occasionally, fantasy is involved (usually reinforced by unwise food habits which upset

the body chemistry). I once knew a woman who was very obese (fat), who worked for a religious organization. She justified her incredible appetite by holding onto the belief that as long as she ate (and grew large), the material substance of the organization would continue to flow and the organization would prosper. A change of environment and the challenge of new situations was sufficient to alter her routine, and she lost weight.

We can even become addicted to attitudes and opinions. We can remain prejudiced even though we have been on the enlightenment path for many years. One major restricting attitude is "All enlightenment paths are good . . . but mine is superior to all others." Or, "My path is the way of devotion (or wisdom) and I refuse to become involved with . . . or even consider . . . other approaches to spiritual freedom."

We can become stagnant in our beliefs, too. We can awaken to the level of understanding the principles of mental correspondence and then settle into a routine of believing that we have access to ultimate truth. In this instance we become aware of the law of mental causes which results in outer effects and we falsely assume that we know all of the answers to life's problems. It is a useful shock when one who has been resting at a certain level of understanding suddenly awakens one morning to realize, "Why I know hardly anything at all about what is really so about life!" This side of the Transcendental Field the opportunity for new discovery is endless. Beyond the veil of *maya* (the sphere of material manifestation) there is only the experience of conscious Being.

Addictions (habits) are one matter; there is also the matter of our being influenced by the electrical characteristics of nature. Since our mind and our body are made up of the substance of nature we are endowed with electric characteristics and influences. There are three in number: the elevating tendency; the tendency in the direction of activity; the trend in the direction of inertia or dullness. Some people are born bright, some are born restless, and

some are born lazy . . . or haven't you noticed? Laziness (inertia) can be overcome by intentional positive action. Restlessness can be neutralized as we ascend into soul awareness. According to how we are dominated by these characteristics (as well as by our mental conditionings as a result of relationships) we perform. This is what Krishna explained to Arjuna in Chapter 17 of the *Bhagavad-Gita.*

> *The faith of people is three-fold, according to their basic nature (i.e., depending upon whether they are influenced by the elevating, activating, or deadening tendencies.) Man (man's evolutionary status) is exactly what his believing is. Rightly resolved (but partially deluded) people worship the gods, restless (and still more deluded) people worship the spirits of demigods, and completely deluded people worship spirits of friends and relatives and ghosts. Extremely materialistic people, with religious impulses, perform self-punishing austerities, injure themselves, and suppress the workings of Spirit.*
>
> *By the foods we take into the body and by our manner of giving (gifts), the level of understanding can be determined. Those who are on the upward way love foods which promote life, vitality, strength, health, joy, and cheerfulness. Restless people are drawn to partake of foods which are bitter, sour, overly seasoned, and which are hard on the system. Lower types eat tasteless, stale, and unclean foods.*
>
> *High-minded people give according to scriptural law, without any expectation whatever of reward. They give wisely because they feel it to be their duty to make right use of the substance of the world. Restless, selfish people give for the sake of expected reward and for the sake of personal*

recognition. The lower types give grudgingly, if at all, without faith, and they tend to try to get things for nothing: that is, without making just compensation.

Discipline of the body is said to include reverence for the spiritual teacher, pure intentions, cleanliness, control of vital energies, and nonviolence. Discipline of speech includes the effort to speak kindly and to be truthful. Discipline of the mind includes silence (at appropriate times), self-control, high resolve. This is all to be observed without any expectation of reward. Whatever we do in order to gain name or fame is a waste of time and is not of lasting value. Harming ourselves or others is destructive and is due to ignorance.

Please read the above message from the Gita several times when you are in a prayerful mood and let the instruction sink into the very core of your Being. We are not here discussing superficial matters. We are not dealing with ideas and themes meant for temporary uplift. We are dealing with the vital heart of the way to spiritual perfection. We are working with the essence, with that which is most useful for total involvement with life, and with God's plan for humanity.

Let us relax and know:

"God is my very life. To the degree that I am open to the activity of the Divine impulse am I in harmony with the flow of nature and the true purpose of my involvement with Nature. I give thanks for this opportunity to know and to respond."

"A wise person takes responsibility for this mental attitude, his daily schedule, his decisions and his personal relationships."

Chapter 4

Human or Divine?
EVERY DAY and EVERY MOMENT . . . WE HAVE A CHOICE

It is very obvious to each of us that the major challenge we face on the enlightenment path is the challenge of learning to live from a level of permanent soul awareness. Even when we inwardly know that we are pure and spiritual beings we often find ourselves responding to inner urges and tendencies which direct us in a course of action which is contrary to our highest ideals. The supreme challenge is for us to learn to live from divine consciousness always, so that instinctual drives and conditioned patterns no longer unconsciously dominate us. Instinct has its place in our lives and habits can be helpful. Survival instincts enable us to repond without thinking in order to adapt to our world. Habits and tendencies can direct us to do automatic things, thus freeing the mind for more creative matters. It is the unconscious influence of instinctual drives and inner tendencies which must be observed. If we are directed to do things which are not in harmony with free and creative living, we must analyze such ten-

dencies and drives and learn to neutralize the ones which are destructive or not useful to our destined purpose in life.

This Matter of Fate and the Role of Destiny

Fate has to do with cause and effect. If I initiate an action, unless I modify or neutralize it, I am sure to reap the results of that action. Every cause results in an effect in this relative world. Past causes are now surfacing as present effects or experiences. Present causes will unfold as future effects, just as surely as night follows the day. This is the law of causation at this level of world expression. We can learn to correctly use this knowledge and wisely initiate causes which will result in creative effects. Fate has to do with our experience in time and space while we are relating to the world of sense perception. Destiny has to do with our ultimate realization as spiritual beings. Every person will eventually awaken and consciously know the truth about life. This experience is destined because each of us is a ray of God, an extension of the Oversoul which has become identified with the material realms.

We are destined to unfold and play a greater conscious role in God's plan for all mankind. How we work in relationship to our destined role is somewhat determined by our level of awareness and our ability and willingness to cooperate with God's influence in our lives. A truly enlightened teacher may say to us, "Leave your old ways and your time-wasting activities and join me in the work of world enlightenment." We may say, "I'd like to, but I have personal things to take care of first. Maybe in a few years I will do as you suggest." In this instance God is speaking, but we may be under the influence of traditional thinking. We may want to respond in the affirmative but the pull of inertia is too strong. Here, then, destiny is in mild conflict with fate. The soul's eventual experience is resisted by the weight of subconscious and unconscious

tendencies. But destiny will win in the end. God always wins.

We Have a Choice

Every one has the same challenge . . . that of consciously determining just how he will think, feel, act, and look out upon life. Every reasonably conscious person since the beginning of time has had to face up to this challenge. Far from being a burden, this can be an opportunity for soul unfoldment! How marvelous to know that we are sufficiently free to make a choice about how our life will go! Imagination and the ability to elect our course consciously in life is special to human beings. Animals, of course, exhibit some use of imagination in the face of problems which must be solved. They also show decision-making ability regarding their response to their associates. Haven't you noticed how a cat, dog, cow, horse, etc., will select his companions as a matter of personal choice and, also, reject others which do not meet his standards? No person on earth, who is conscious, is exempt from this challenge (opportunity) of making decisions.

If we are ill we can decide to learn how to be well. If we are confused we can decide how to be free of confusion. If we are afraid, we can find out how to overcome our fear. If we are impoverished, we can learn the laws of fulfilled living. If we feel alienated, we can learn to become self-reliant. If our questions require answers, we can find an expert to show us the way to knowledge. If we have allowed ourselves to be the victims of circumstances, we can learn to stop being victims. If we are negative in our thinking, we can learn to be constructive. If we are sad, we can learn to be cheerful. If we are restless, we can learn to be calm. If we are bound by traditional thinking patterns, we can learn to carefully examine our problem and see through it.

Each day when we awaken from restful sleep we can adjust our mental attitude and relax into God's presence.

God is ever with us and all we have to do is to acknowledge Him. When we open ourselves to God, God's supportive love and being flows up from the soul level. We then become aware of God inside and outside. God is within each person as the soul and God is without as the Oversoul or omnipresent Cosmic Soul. There is no mystery about God's reality as both the soul and the Cosmic Being. God has expressed as the worlds and He has individualized his presence as us. This is the truth which all enlightened people experience. This is not a belief, it is an experience which is possible because of the nature of God. We can experience as much of the reality of God as we can accept. God is what God is and God awaits at the door of our minds to be allowed entry.

Let us realize this major point: God is awaiting our invitation to enter our mental field and physical form. The masters of perfection tell us that it is by devotional surrender to God that the mind is purified and the ego is erased so that God can express through and as us. We do not have to beg God. We do not have to make any special deals with God. We do not have to prove anything to God. We only have to open ourselves to God's reality. I know this is not clear and it is not easy for one who is new on the path. But, let me assure you, if you are one who is new on the quest, time and patience will result in a very gratifying experience of God. We are seeking God and doing the best we can, perhaps. But God is also seeking entry into our lives. God is knocking at the door of our consciousness and is more than willing to come in and take over our lives completely. How do we allow God into our lives? Is there a magical formula? No, all we have to do is to prepare ourselves. All we have to do is to cleanse the mind and body so that we become the type of pure vessel God can use. Sometimes, after preparation, it is but a matter of our learning to relax and be receptive to God's influence.

In many instances, according to published testimony, seekers on the path have labored hard to purify the mind

and nervous system so that soul awareness could express. Sooner or later their efforts resulted in mystical insight. A true mystic is one who sees clearly *that which is so about life* (the truth) and is not, necessarily, given to ecstasy and visions. When the influence of God is felt in the soul, it sometimes seems as though an all-consuming fire burns to dry up all mortal resistance to the Light. This is when the grace of God is active and superconscious influences overcome tendencies which were formerly resisting illumination.

We cannot always predict the interior changes to be experienced. God knows best for us just how to work within us to prepare us for a higher life in harmony with His will. The intelligence of God is within us as the intelligence of the soul.

Whenever we are faced with challenge, we can pause for a moment and make sure we are looking out upon our world from the ideal point of view. With practice, we learn that we can determine whether we look at the world from the viewpoint of limitation or from the viewpoint of being free to make wise decisions. When we are caught in the confusion of restless thoughts and unsettled emotional surges, our judgment is impaired. This is when we have to rise free of the restrictions of mental impressions and emotionalism. Adjusting the viewpoint is a matter of practice rather than the result of expected revelation. If we wait for change to happen to us, we may wait for a long time before experiencing needed changes in attitude and outlook. On the other hand, if we determine to choose the attitude and the outlook which we feel will be most useful, we can do it. Here are some things to practice in order to learn to control states of consciousness:

Learn to Adjust Mental Attitude at Will – Whenever you are alone and quiet, be aware of your existing mental attitude. If change is needed, practice by thinking how it might be to maintain a more desirable attitude and then move into it. If you are fearful, practice being fearless. If you are too caught up in finding fault with others, learn

to see others as pure spiritual beings and look past the outer tendencies and appearances. If you are despondent, learn to be optimistic. If you are restless, learn to be calm. As you practice with total attention you will learn that you are, indeed, the master of mental attitude, moods, and feelings. No person can cause you to be other than what you, yourself, decide to be. No longer need we blame our environment for our present state of mind or consciousness. Self-honesty results in our taking personal responsibility.

Learn to Alter Your State of Consciousness at Will – Sit quietly and practice altering your state of consciousness. First, be totally aware of your body and your surroundings. Then, turn your attention upward to the third eye center (the space between the eyebrows) and flow to that point. Be relaxed and aware as you observe and experience the process. You will feel your attention withdrawing from the senses as you settle into the process. As you withdraw your attention from the senses to the third eye center you also withdraw your concern for outer matters. The "world" cannot touch you when you are flowing attention to the third eye center. Thoughts and feelings may persist for a while, but, in time, these will settle. Let your thoughts be only of God and let your knowing be: "I am a bright, free being. I am made in the image and likeness of God. I am at peace now. I am fulfilled now. I am serene and content now."

Practice During Twilight Sleep – When you awaken after having rested for a suitable duration, remain relaxed and conscious. Before the body becomes fully alert and the thoughts flow to daily matters, remain inwardly centered and still. Learn by experimentation how to flow back gradually into almost-sleep and then how to bring your attention to the surface again. Notice that when you are alert but still relaxed the cares of the world cannot touch you. You are the same, but you are not allowing dormant thoughts to surface and you are not presently concerned with anything of the outer world.

We must, of course, learn to handle ourselves in relationship to other people and with events in our world. But we cannot be truly effective until we have learned to handle ourselves. Self-mastery results in freedom of expression in this and all worlds. You see, we are now preparing for eternity. We are not thinking of merely getting through this incarnation with a minimum of strain; we are planning our forever future in God's great plan. This is why it is essential for us to clear our problems now and to overcome our limitations now. The true spiritual life is not for mild and curious seekers on the path who consider the practices more as entertainment than exercise-for-purification. Surely you have noticed others (although we do not judge them) who are using their occasions of study as diversion from duties and who are attending discussion groups as a social opportunity. When we are mild in our practices we can only expect small results. When we are moderate in our practice we will experience more evident results. When we are fully involved with the process of purification and change, we experience dramatic results. Again, it is up to the individual to decide just how life will be lived and what will be the final experience.

Read the scriptures and read about the saints and enlightened people of various traditions. Notice how intent they were upon the process of God-realization. Isn't this an inspiration to us all? If you have friends who share your spiritual interests, love and bless them always. Inspire them as you can and encourage them along the way. But, if they are not interested in living the principles, if they would rather draw you into their routine of purposeless living, do not mingle with them too much. We should not compare ourselves with others, nor should we make judgments about others, but we should be attentive to whether or not we are providing the most useful opportunity for our own soul unfoldment.

We have Twenty-Four Hours
Each Day to Be Aware of God

The weakest excuse we can make for not paying attention to essentials is the often stated, "I don't have time." Isn't it interesting that we find time to do the things which appeal to us, but we often neglect matters of spiritual importance? We have time for sleep, for idle talk, for worry and unrest. We certainly have time for meditation and contemplation of the nature of God. Right where we are, no matter what is happening about us, we have an opportunity to be attentive and appropriate. Our present environment is our field of opportunity for learning to see clearly and for learning to live from the level of soul awareness. Several centuries ago there lived in India a great saint who also happened to be a king. His name was Janaka. He was known for his executive ability as well as for his God-realization.

One day a man came to him and said, "My guru has sent me to you to learn the secret of always remaining aware of God's presence. I do not know why he sent me to you because you are obviously a man of the world and not a recluse. What do you say?"

The king responded, "Put this cup of water on your head and walk around the palace wall once without letting a drop spill. If you succeed I will tell you my secret. If you fail you will be turned away."

The seeker did as he was told and, after a long time, returned to the starting point with the cup and the water carefully balanced on his head. The king asked him, "What were you thinking about as you walked around the palace walls?"

The man replied, " I was thinking only of the water and of how I must not let one drop spill."

"Here, then, is my secret!" Janaka Explained. "While I am involved with my temporal responsibilities, in the background of my mind there is only the thought of God."

We obviously cannot always be preoccupied with philosophical thoughts and speculations while we are paying conscious attention to daily duties, but we can learn to be inwardly aware of the presence of God all of the time.

No matter what we are doing, God can be our companion and our sure support. This is the message of the great seers; we are to perform intelligently in the world and still remain aware of the inner process. This kind of attention to the essentials results in Cosmic Consciousness. While thus focused on the business at hand we know that our body is but the incident in time and space through which the soul is expressing, while, in a larger and true sense, we are attuned to the entire cosmic process and the totality of God as our actual reality.

Let us look more closely at this matter of thinking, speaking and arriving at surface conclusions about what we see about us. There are two levels from which to understand the importance of our relationship with the outer world. We have been taught to see only the good and the beautiful. We have been taught to think only the highest and best of others and to speak of them kindly. We have been taught not to judge others or condemn them with our inner opinions. Why is this such a vital teaching? The answer: our discipline is for others and it is for ourselves as well. Examples follow:

Our Spiritual Duty to Others – Whether we know it or not, our attitude toward other people has a subtle influence upon them. People tend to reflect our belief or opinion of them. They tend to respond to us according to our own expectation about them. An experiment was once conducted in a high school. A group of students with similar learning skills were separated into two groups. One group was assigned to a teacher who was told that the children were bright and quick to learn. Another group was assigned to a teacher who was told the the children were difficult to teach. The first group got along better with the teacher and performed better in class than did the second group. Group one was expected to perform well and they did. Group two was expected to perform poorly and they did. In many instances we can either bless others or we can contribute to their inability to function just by expecting them to perform one way or another. Other people have a

responsibility for learning to think and function for themselves, of course. But we can influence them constructively if we will work with them on the soul level and believe only the highest and best for them and of them.

Our Spiritual Duty to Ourselves – We bless ourselves when we see only the good in other people. Why is this so? Because as we train ourselves to see life in this manner we actually remove from our mind and consciousness the very conditions we refuse to see in others. When we see limitation and negative conditions and believe them to be permanent and not subject to change, we actually impress these beliefs into our own subconscious level of mind. We cannot be pure in mind and heart if we are forever seeing problems in other people. If we think that we are pure but others are not, then we have a personal problem to handle and clear from our system.

We can learn to allow others to unfold in their own way without trying to force them to become a duplicate of ourselves. Jesus had some things to say about this matter of accusing others of imperfections while we still remain with things of our own to clear up. Spiritual duty does not stop at the meditation session. Spiritual duty continues through every waking moment of the day. The ideal is to live always from the level of soul awareness. If we see to our inner work God will meet us at our level of receptivity.

A man sent to see a great sage and asked him a question. He asked, "Can you direct me to a perfect master with whom I can study?" The sage gently responded, "Are you a perfect disciple?"When we see to our inner purity, then we will no longer have to seek for anything. Whatever we require will unfold about us in perfect harmony and with natural timing. The enlightened teachers can assist us with their consciousness and with their wise instruction but it is we who must do the major portion of the inner work. Remember the words of Jesus? He taught, "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

One's unthinking response might be, "No one is perfect." Yes, as long as one is in human (conditioned) con-

sciousness, he is not yet perfected. But when one awakens and learns to consciously live from the soul level, he is as perfect as God is perfect. We are made in the image and likeness of God. God is expressing as each one of us, at the soul level.When the mind is cleared of destructive and non-useful impressions and tendencies, then the perfection of the soul shines through the mind and one lives in a heavenly state of consciousness even while yet on earth.

We know . . . each of us knows . . . just how well we are doing on the spiritual path. We do not have to ask anyone else how we are doing. We know ourselves better than anyone else can ever know us. We know our aspirations. We know our attitudes. We know our feelings. We know our strong points and we know our weak points. We also know what we have to do to clear unwanted conditions inside of us and in our personal environment. We can begin right where we are to open ourselves to Reality. The realization of spiritual perfection is not a matter of some other time or some other place . . . it is a matter of seeing existing possibilities here and now.

If we will but see to our spiritual business, then God will work through us to do what God wants to do. Let us know, clearly and fully:

> *"I am a Life-giving being, made in the image and likeness of God. From this moment forward I see to my own inner purity and I see to my own spiritual duties. From this moment forward I live the ideal life to the best of my ability. God* **through** *me and* **as** *me works without any flaw and with perfect ease to fulfill His purposes. I inwardly rejoice in this conscious participation with Life."*

"When impurities are destroyed, perfection of body, mind and senses is achieved."

– Yoga Sutras

Chapter 5

Is a LIFE WITHOUT LIMITATION POSSIBLE?

According to the teachings of the great seers, we are here to awaken to the realization of our divine nature and to live as perfect expressions of God. Hear the words of Jesus (*St. John 8: 31, 32*), ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Take to heart the words of Krishna (*Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 18*) "A person who studies this wisdom in the right light becomes free. One who puts into practice what he learns shall become god-like." Finally, from the *Yoga Sutras* (Book Two, verse 43), "When impurities are destroyed, perfection of body, mind, and senses is achieved."

If we are meant to live without limitation, why is it that so many people live with obvious restrictions? Why are not more people expressing true soul freedom as recommended by the great teachers? Let us explore the possibilities before us as we examine this ideal of realizing our true potential.

The Initial Cause Limitation

The scriptures are in agreement as to man's basic problem. They teach us that when the soul identifies with

mind and body it does so with such fullness that it partially "forgets" its real nature. This is called delusion or unconsciousness. This results in a sense of being apart from God, therefore, the sense of limitation. If one could awaken from over-identification with the mind and body, one would be soul-conscious and free.

How to awaken from this condition of over-identification and unconsciousness? By wanting to be conscious and by self-examination, discernment, and correct meditation. Self-examination will result in the understanding of our real nature. Discernment makes possible our seeing clearly what is the truth as in contrast to what is not the truth. Meditation offers the opportunity for personal experience of the soul through mind-transcendence.

Other Causes of Limitation

Delusion results in unconsciousness and this makes possible all other causes. Enlightenment clears all restricting influences quickly, but there are practical things we can do to handle specific problems when we become aware of them. A major source of restriction is the collection of mental impressions we have accumulated over many years (perhaps many incarnations) of experience, observation, and "learning" through association with other people. All that we have witnessed or experienced has left a trace in our memory bank. Our hurts and reactions to life (especially the emotional reactions) have left impressions in the mind. Some memories and impressions are constructive, that is, they contribute to our ability to function and to reach our chosen goals. Some memories and impressions are destructive, because they restrict us and, often, even move us in the direction of further unconsciousness or death.

Thoughts, opinions, beliefs, attitudes and reactions to challenge which do not contribute to health and freedom should be examined and cleansed from the system. The fast way to clear the mental field of unwanted patterns is

simply to release them and let them go. These patterns can be dismissed without our having to examine them closely. Frequently we have allowed ourselves to fall into a negative pattern of thinking and reacting. We can, with practice, overcome negative tendencies by consciously doing what we know we should do. We *can* regulate our mental attitude, we *can* control our thoughts, we *can* put order into our lives, we *can* train ourselves to respond intelligently and appropriately to challenge instead of reacting emotionally and unwisely. Little by little (or very quickly!) we can resist destructive tendencies and inclinations and finally neutralize them.

Many times we find, upon close examination, that though we outwardly endeavor to lead a constructive and purposeful life we are, in fact, inwardly moving in the direction of self-destruction, unconsciousness, or death. In this instance the subconscious "will" is in the direction of unknowing instead of in the direction of enlightenment. When the *will to live* is not neutralized by destructive tendencies and drives, then one easily experiences mental health, emotional balance, physical health, and total freedom of expression in this world.

Sometimes the major problem is that one is afraid of life, because of lack of experience or because of fear of failure. Perhaps one has memories of previous failures and the resulting hurts. Perhaps one is afraid of possible reactions from family or friends who have become accustomed to one's life of limitation. It may be that one's close associates prefer that he remain restricted, even as they are restricted. We tend to feel comfortable with people who are living as we are. Perhaps one is not inclined to necessary change. More than one person has exclaimed, "I don't want to change, I just want things to get a little better!" Inner change must precede outer change in most instances. Sometimes the unexpected happens and good fortune comes our way, and this draws forth a positive and affirmative response to support our joy as a result of richer, fuller living.

It may be that our nervous system is not yet sufficiently refined to allow the full force of soul power to manifest. As we meditate, pray, and remain open to the activity of Life within us, the nervous system will be relieved of stress and natural function will result. Also, as a result of deep internal transformations of energy, a very fine energy is produced which actually alters the structure of the brain. It used to be thought that the nervous system could not be repaired, but Yoga masters (and other adepts) have taught for centuries that the brain and nervous system can actually be refined and new structures (if needed) built into the system. The creative energy of God (the soul) knows no limitation. It is taught that when we do not waste our vital forces, the restrained energies are transmuted into subtle forces which transform the body from the inside. Soul force does all of the needed inner work when given freedom to express, because this force is directed by the innate intelligence of the soul, which is the same as the intelligence of God.

Even the physical body can limit us if it is not healthy and functional. We can overcome physical limitations as we pay attention to soul-realization, mental purity, emotional balance, meditation, diet, exercise, and rest. Even inherited tendencies can be overcome if we have a will to confront them and rid ourselves of them. The major point is this . . . do not limit God! *Most restrictions are due to our unwillingness to confront the possibility of being spiritually, mentally, and physically free*!

A person might say, "I don't want to be limited, but I am!" The affirmation "I am limited" keeps us in bondage. What are we doing to remove the restrictions? What are we doing to allow Life to move freely? Are we doing our part? Or are we waiting for God or someone else to do for us what we should already be doing for ourselves?

Do Outer Conditions Limit Us?

Are we victims of circumstances or of influences flow-

ing to us from outer sources? We may be in a situation because we caused it or because we accepted it, but the conditions can change because nothing in this world is firm and unyielding. Forms and circumstances are forever undergoing change. We can either alter a situation or a relationship or we can walk away from it and allow it to remain true for those who want to experience it. The choice is ours, always. If we share limiting circumstances with other people and they do not want to change, we can either make inner changes in ourselves and flow with the situation without personal pain or conflict, or we can leave them to their chosen life-pattern and seek a new one for ourselves. Others should be as free to choose as we are free to choose. Let us never blame another person (or a group of people) for our circumstances. Even if it seems that "they are doing it to us," it is we who allow it.

We must always refuse to accept into our consciousness the negative opinions of other people. We need not feel any fear or any sense of inner depression because of fear-talk regarding recessions and coming hard times. This has only to do with conditioned thinking, and people who are attuned to that level of thinking will experience whatever the trend happens to be. The person who remains conscious and open to Life will not experience any limitation or any personal problems even when many other people are having difficulties. We cannot experience anything that we do not allow in our consciousness. Lack of money, lack of opportunity, lack of any kind may be true for those who are open to these experiences, but lack will not be a part of our lives when we are established in perfect understanding. There is no shortage of energy in the universe because God's energy is always the same in quantity. Most of God's energy is unformed while some of it appears as things. There is no shortage of substance in the universe because God's substance (fine matter) fills the universe. God can and will manifest to you and to me according to our ability to accept, regardless of what other people are experiencing. Heaven (fulfillment) or hell (restriction and pain) reflect

from our own state of consciousness. We love (accept) and bless every person, but we do not have to share their world if they are determined to remain in limiting circumstances. When we are firm in understanding we can invite others into our world, if they will learn to see how it is possible for them to enter it.

The kingdom of heaven is available to anyone who will accept it. *The only price we pay for freedom is that of giving up everything that prevents it.* The struggle is not with appearances but with inner attitudes and feelings. The outer world is but a shadow of mental processes. *The natural tendency of Life is in the direction of fulfillment.* This means that when we release inner restrictions Life will unfold in perfect proportion and we will experience the fulfillment of soul destiny automatically. Remember this: . . . *Life naturally moves in the direction of fulfillment and completion.* There is a supportive aspect to Life which insures order and certain fulfillment. Life wants to express fully through you and through me! It will do so if we release all that restricts Its trend in the direction of fulfillment.

Intertia or mental sluggishness often holds us back from success. There is no individual "intelligence" which is operating in a contest with God to control us. Our "enemies" are sloth, restlessness, purposelessness, and lack of knowledge. There is no outer force or condition which is working against us in any manner. One might ask, "What about planetary influences? Do they not influence us?" Yes, we are influenced by the energies which emanate from the planets, just as we are mildly influenced by the energies of all with whom we relate, but we are not controlled by any of these energy-influences. How we respond to what comes our way is the major factor in our lives. It is true that each person is "imprinted" at birth with specific planet-energy-characteristics, but this is just part of our participating in a world where energies interact. There are cycle-influences because of planetary energies, and these are known even by analysts who examine business trends,

crime trends, and the trends (relating to short-lived group interests, known as fads) common to society in general. Unconscious people and partially conscious people who are not self-disciplined tend to flow with trends. They participate with what is "in" at the moment and then, after a duration, move on to another "in" trend. Such people may consider themselves to be "hip" or "in the know" and "where it's at," but they are really slaves to popular emotional attractions. A truly conscious person is always the same. He is not dull or listless, he is *awake* in the highest sense of the term. A truly conscious person is attentive, appropriate, and centered in soul understanding. Such a person views, with a degree of mild and cheerful detachment, all of the changes which occur about him. Such a person is, literally, in the world and correctly relating, but he is not of (used by) the world. A conscious person can face anything Life might present with equal ease and inner balance. Such a person is aware of the truth; the inner is real (it does not change), the outer is not real (it is subject to mutation). Therefore we are to stand firm in the conscious realization of our God-nature and not react to whatever surfaces on the screen of time and space. Whatever is "out there" is an appearance, projected as a form or situation because of the consciousness-condition of those involved with it. Pure Consciousness is devoid of characteristics, and when we experience It we experience Being. Consciousness with characteristics manifests as a variety of forms and expressions, but the forms and expressions are made up of the energy of God. This is why we can see God in any situation, because God's energy is expressing there, modified by the restricting influences of the participants.

Paramahansa Yogananda often compared the world scene to that which is observed on a screen when one views a motion picture film. "One sees on the screen," he said, "the images which seem human and real and which evoke from him an emotional response. But, when one looks back to the projection booth, one understands that only a

film made up of light tones and dark tones is passing through the machine and clear bright light makes possible what we observe and experience." The light tones and the dark tones are mental conditions in each of us; the clear bright light is the light of God (as soul light) which makes possible the outer appearance. Because of my innate knowing and because of over thirty years of conscious seeking-to-know, I am absolutely convinced that what we experience is the result of what is in our own mental-consciousness condition. What we see and experience is either what we deeply want or need to experience or it is due to God's influence within us. There is either the outpicturing of mental patterns or there is the need of the soul to do what it does to experience the fulfillment of personal destiny. Personal destiny, in the true sense, is God's will for us, and God knows what God intends in the final result.

Remove Every Obstacle

I once visited the offices and warehouse of a large book distributor in a western city. I was shown through the buildings and the manager explained to me just how their organization worked. He explained how the orders were received, how the books were shipped, how the billing was done, and why they were so successful. He said to me, "We remove every obstacle for the customer so that buying from us is convenient and simple."

Obstacles to personal success may be outside or they may be inside. There may be external conditions which need to be streamlined and harmonized, and this may take strong decisions and clear planning. However, even if outer conditions are ideal, if the inner attitude is self-limiting, one still has not yet removed all of the obstacles to natural success and fulfillment.

I talked with a man who was in a position to offer a nationally advertised service and to earn a substantial amount of money. All he had to do was to make a specific number of telephone calls five days a week, present the

service according to a tested formula, and a known percentage of sales would result. His problem was, he said, that he did not structure his time wisely and, therefore, did not follow through with the success-formula. He was not really lazy, he was preoccupied with metaphysical studies and had yet to train himself to become involved in a practical way with his world.

I have talked with ministers of small churches who have told me, "There are not very many people in this city who are interested in Truth teachings." And, yet another minister would come into that city and soon have a large and prosperous work. Even ministers and Truth teachers sometimes forget that the obstacles are not "out there," they are in one's own mind and consciousness.

An obstacle to success in life may be one's fear to participate. Let us be very practical and examine this matter of financial participation. Spending wisely is not wasting money, it is investing because we are participating with the flow of social energy. The moment we spend wisely, that moment we are in the flow of Life. At that moment we are experiencing true prosperity because we are able to give or invest. When we spend to retain the services of another person, that person is compensated with money and we are compensated with service. When we purchase something, the person from whom we make the purchase is prospered and we are still prosperous because we now have substance in a different form. So there has not been any depletion. The energy of God is simply circulating. When we contribute to a worthwhile social or spiritual activity, we are participating with an activity which is rendering a service to many people. We are then assisting our world either by making provision for others or by contributing to their spiritual unfoldment. When we give money to a worthwhile cause, we should not think in terms of any eventual return, because the moment we share we are in the stream of Life.

Tradition has it that in some of the Asian countries, where it is the usual thing for people in a community to support the local temple with money, food and other

things, the spiritual leaders will often make strong requests during times of financial challenge among the people. The reason for this is to encourage people to be open to the flow and not to become caught up in thoughts of fear which will only contribute to greater problems. Whatever we do to remain in the flow of Life is useful. Whatever we do that shuts off the flow is not useful.

Why Not Do This Now?

Get a few sheets of writing paper and sit quietly, contemplating yourself in relationship to your world. Write a list of your present blessings. If you enjoy good health, if you are knowledgeable about the nature of God, if you are reasonably free to do whatever you want to do, write these current blessings on your paper. Now, make a list of the challenges, problems or obstacles now confronting you. Opposite each item listed, write a possible solution. What do you need to do to clear your life? What (perhaps) do you have to release from your thinking or feeling because of its restricting influence? If you are doing things which do not contribute to the reaching of your chosen goals, decide to stop doing these things. If there are things you should do but are not doing to reach your chosen goals, make a decision now to do these things. Are you allowing other people to influence you in a manner which is not useful? Then cease being unduly influenced and, if need be, change your relationships. If you tend to put off doing what should be done, decide from this moment onward that you will be prompt and efficient in handling your responsibilities. If you are not as conscious as you should be when performing your duties, resolve now to be more attentive and more competent. This alone is extremely useful spirtual training. The only time we have in which to live and experience is now . . . and what we do now is of vital importance.

Make that list and then make a written plan of action so that you will be motivated now to *remove from your*

life every obstacle to success and fulfillment. We always stress the importance of spiritual fulfillment, but when we are truly soul-conscious we will also be able to function realistically in our day-to-day relationships. One may have some inner knowledge of the nature of Consciousness, but if this knowledge is not applied in a practical manner it is hardly of any value. What is the point of knowing the way to freedom if we do not implement the procedures which make freedom possible? What is the point in knowing the principles of creative living if we are content to be victims of inner and outer causes? *If we are not living up to our true potential, we are but toying with the spiritual principles and we are not sincere at all. If we are not living up to our true potential, we are wasting the time and energy of our teachers and the time and energy of those who tried to assist us. If we are not living up to our true potential, those who have instructed us and written for our benefit have lived in vain. They have benefited from their open sharing but we have not been respectful to them.* Why should a person teach another if the one taught is not going to utilize the teaching? Why should a person write articles and helpful books if the readers are not going to respond to the message?

After thirty years of teaching I understand the law of averages regarding how many people out of a given number will respond to the teaching. My guru personally initiated over 100,000 people and only a small number remained true to the practice of meditation. I have talked with hundreds of thousands of men and women over the past two decades and only a few really "heard" me. Remember the words of Jesus, as quoted in the opening paragraph of this treatise? Remember: ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If one does not "continue in the word," if one does not heed the message, he cannot rightly be called a disciple. If one does not "continue in the word" he will not know the truth. If one does not know the truth he will not be free.

It is so easy to talk about the ideal way to live! It is so comforting to think about the possibilities! But what are we doing about it? How are we using the principles and in what ways are we experiencing personal transformation? Is our life so very much better now than it was a few years ago, or are we living in the same predictable pattern as we make excuses and think in terms of "one day" when we finally learn to live as we know we should can can live?

More Things to Do Now

If you have not been attentive to a regular program of study and meditation, make your resolution now to put needed order into your life. Write out your schedule: when to meditate, when to read your inspirational materials, how to implement the principles in order to live in a realistic way. Good intentions are not useful if they are not put into practice. Learn to follow through. Learn to complete cycles of action. Learn to keep your agreements, both with yourself and with others. Be responsible. Whenever doubt, fear, or inertia begin to invade the mind . . . pause and reflect: "Pure Consciousness is my true nature. I am established in God and I live in harmony with nature's laws." Whenever you feel yourself becoming caught up in restless and purposeless activites, pause and be centered. With practice we can resist, restrain, and finally neutralize destructive and non-useful tendencies and inclinations. With practice we can learn to say "No" to that which cannot contribute to our highest good and how to say "Yes" to all that is helpful.

Even if your life is flowing harmoniously now, if there are deepseated patterns which may later awaken to cause you problems and if there are mild tendencies which you are effectively holding in check, be sure to experience profound meditation on a regular schedule. As we rest in conscious meditation, superconscious (soul) influences flow more strongly through the mental field and down into the physical body. These superconscious influences

will purify and transform on deeper levels and on subtle levels of which you have no present conscious awareness.

Here is something to consciously know:

> *"I know that I am a radiant soul because God is expressing as me. Even while handling challenge and responsibilities I remain firm in the understanding of my real nature and of my destined role in God's plan."*

"By contemplation of the Ultimate Good, one experiences the fulfillment of destiny."

Chapter 6

PRAYER, CONTEMPLATION, TRUE MEDITATION and SOUL FULFILLMENT

We have chosen our theme in order to have the opportunity to clarify various matters which are important to all sincere truth students. Almost everyone knows what prayer is, but not all are able to pray effectively. Many people are not clear on the difference between contemplation and true (correct) meditation. Everyone is interested in soul fulfillment.

What is the most important ingredient in one's inner nature if one would be enlightened and, therefore, fulfilled as a spiritual being? It is not "good karma," nor is it even correct performance of method or technique. The most important ingredient in one's inner nature if one would be fulfilled as a spiritual being is the *deep inner conviction that such realization is possible and the yearning for this conscious experience*. If one has this inner drive for true knowledge, nothing can possibly stand in the way of realization. With this inner drive and determinism one will move through every obstacle, remove every barrier, and enter into such an intimate relationship with God that whatever is required for one's unfoldment will come forth.

We all know of people who attend regular study sessions but who never seem to put what they learn into practice. We all know people who have read many books on the subject of enlightenment but who are still confused. We sometimes meet people who have traveled around the world to sit at the feet of sages and returned home with no greater understanding than was theirs before they left. We even see some people who have the opportunity to associate almost daily with an illumined teacher but who remain, themselves, unenlightened. Why is it that so many seem to be sincere in the enlightenment path but only a few seem to exhibit the characteristics of enlightenment? Is it true as has been written, that "many are called but few are chosen," or that "out of one thousand, one seeks the truth, and, out of every one thousand persons who seek, one finds freedom"?

I know about percentages and the law of averages. I know about conclusions drawn from objective examination of what seems to be happening among the ranks of truth students. I even know, as do you, that it is often easier to know what to do than to do it and that often "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Even truth teachers are aware of their present limitations, and they might say, in the words of Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*, by Shakespeare), "It is a good divine who can follow his own instructions. I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than to be one of the twenty to follow my own teaching." Perhaps one of the reaons for the patience shown by many truth teachers is that they know, from personal experience, the struggle between the higher nature and the lower tendencies.

When we are firmly resolved to experience the highest truth (enlightenment, hence, perfect knowledge which liberates the soul) we find that all of our urges, abilities and drives are coordinated in the direction of success. We are then more easily able to establish our priorities and to decide what is important to us and what is not important . . . or what is essential to our spiritual unfoldment in con-

trast to what is of no value whatever. When we are resolved to experience the highest truth we do everything we can that we know to do to make possible the release and expression of the soul's potential. One who is intent upon the path does not whine, complain, or float along in a despondent mood. One who is rightly resolved spends every waking moment being attentive to the process of life and to discerning that which is true in contrast to that which is not true. Even during hours of sleep, at a deeper level, the process of cleansing and soul awakening continues.

Above all else, it is our involvement in living according to the principles we know that is most important. When we do our best to live in accordance with the principles of natural living, we not only benefit from the experience but we also extend our awareness and soon become even more conscious and more able than before. The more successful we are in making intelligent and productive use of our abilities, the better tends to be our mental and emotional health. A psychotic person is out of touch with reality and incapable of function. A neurotic person is somewhat functional, but he is adjusting and handling himself in his world in an immature and limited fashion. A totally health-minded person is a conscious being who is able to move freely through time and space and who is able to handle himself and his environment in a creative and appropriate manner. One can prove to himself that function equals awareness and a sense of life-appreciation simply by learning skills. Haven't we all experienced the inner sense of freedom and competence which results from having done a task with perfect style and appropriateness? Whether we are in good communication with others, performing well at some project, or just feeling in the flow of life, we feel light and confident. When the restrictions are gone, when the barriers to doing anything are removed, we experience the inner joy which is evidence of freedom. When things are not flowing easily, when obstacles seem insurmountable, when the pressure seems too great to handle, we become depressed and we begin to lose hope.

No wonder, then, that so many people are unhappy: because they cannot see any real future which is worth their effort or time given.

The pure ideal is not to do anything for happiness as the result. The pure ideal is to learn to function intelligently and creatively, and then inner contentment will be the automatic result. If we are working for the result we are pursuing the ideal of "pleasurable feeling," and such end-results are but fleeting. They are "fun," but they are not lasting experiences. Once they have faded we will have to seek out another pleasure-causing activity. Herein is the secret of *Karma Yoga*. When we read that one should work without seeking the results of that work we are sometimes confused. How can one work, we say, without looking forward to the results? Of course, we work to accomplish our objectives and to reach our goals because this is the practical process of handling ourselves in our world. The setting and reaching of goals is the process of living; the inner satisfaction which naturally arises within us as a result of creative participation is not a reward for effort expended, it is the spontaneous acknowledgement of the soul to the experience of free expression.

If we do anything for the end-result only, we may have to examine our motives. Usually, we perform actions in order to accomplish things and we feel a measure of satisfaction as a result. If we are spiritually mature we do what we do because it has been given to us to do, not because we are looking forward to the "flush" of accomplishment or the praise of others. The *being* and the *doing* is where spiritual freedom lies; the results just happen. Little does the world know of the really useful work that has been done by men and women who have been content to remain silent and out of the gaze of the public. Such people know their respective duties, and the performance of their duties is their offering to the world. Incentive awards and recognition for efforts expended may (and do) have a place in business and social settings, where the people involved are not yet conscious and the only way to

motivate them is to recognize their accomplishments. A more soul-satisfying way to perform needed work is to do what needs to be done because it needs to be done. One has to watch one's inner response to this process, also, because even if others do not acknowledge our contributions, we may take secret pride in our accomplishments. To neutralize "personal pride as a result of accomplishment," be reminded of the words of Jesus: "I, of myself, do nothing. The Father within, He doeth these works." When we are living from relative consciousness (when we think in terms of God and ourselves), we should realize that our life is a gift from God. When we are living from the level of soul-understanding we know that God *is us* in action. I know this matter of understanding our relationship to (and *as*) God is subtle and requires discernment, but it is essential to us if we are to live as we are destined to live. Every soul has its own spiritual destiny and we cannot really compare the process from one soul to another. For instance:

Souls Yet Awakening – These are the people who are working to awaken from the condition of not knowing the nature of Reality. These people are moving from unconsciousness to full awareness and, for them, the process is a struggle to pull free from the influence of inertia. In our present Time-Cycle the majority on the planet are in this situation. I do not say that "the majority on the planet are in this *category*" because to state this would be to restrict them to a firm situation, as part of a larger process. Who can tell when individual souls will awaken from the group process which is their current and temporary situation?

Partially Awakened Souls with Restrictions – These are people who have a measure of spiritual understanding but who are still pulling free from restricting influences. In occult circles we would refer to such people as having "karma to work through" before being truly free. These people have but to surrender their sense of ego (sense of being apart from the Source) in order to awaken completely from all restrictions. The most direct way for them is to

serve an enlightenment cause without any personal desire at all.

Conscious Souls on a Special Mission – These souls know what they have come to do and they do their duty without being influenced by opinions and attitudes of others who do not understand them. They may even exhibit characteristics which seem inconsistent with enlightenment, but these characteristics are superficial and are the result of their having agreed to take on a body and play a role in nature. When their work is done they drop all restricting characteristics and awaken fully to their pure nature, as they were before they agreed to become involved.

These are but a few soul processes and do not include the entire range of possibilities, because the activity of God cannot be contained in the mental compartments of the mind. *Conscious souls on a special mission* do not always play a dramatic public role. Most of God's purposes do not have anything to do with publicly acknowledged activities.

Prayer, the Direct Approach to God

It seems to me that in our involvement with techniques, methods and procedures, we often overlook the most direct approach to God, that of prayer. Anyone can pray and anyone can talk with God. Prayer can be with eyes open or closed and the position of the body is not important to results. One can pray at the beginning of meditation and then flow easily into the experience of the deep silence. Whenever one is inclined, one can inwardly converse with God and experience a personal and satisfying relationship with God. God is the Oversoul, the Cosmic Soul, so God is present everywhere. Our prayer approach will vary according to our feeling and need of the moment.

Pray for God's Grace – A direct approach is to pray and be open to the activity of God within you and around you. God is your very Self, your soul nature. God is also outside your body and active always, seeing to the support

of the worlds. As we open ourselves to the reality of God, God becomes more real to us and is our moment-to-moment friend and companion.

Pray for Enlightenment – Pray sincerely until all mental restrictions are banished and conscious knowing, the enlightenment experience, will be yours. As we pray in this manner we surrender the sense of ego (sense of separate self) to God, and then we experience that God is all there is.

Pray for Guidance – If you need direction in your life, pray for guidance and then be still. You will experience a flow of creative ideas and you will see people and events unfold around you in harmony.

Pray for Others – In the *New Testament* (James 5: 16) we read, in part, ". . . and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." When we pray correctly and fervently, with single-pointed concentration, results are sure to occur. To be "righteous" means to be in harmony with natural laws and principles. What if we do not know how to pray for another person? What if we do not know what is best for another person? We do not have to pray for specific effects, we have but to pray for God's influence in another person's life so that the person experiences a degree of soul awakening and realizes whatever is for his highest good.

To pray for others is good therapy for us because we must, when we pray, cleanse ourselves of all negative thoughts and emotions. It is impossible for us to pray for others and still retain petty and small ideas. If you are concerned about someone, regardless of where they are (even if they have left this plane and are moving through subtle astral realms), simply just pray for them and love and bless them and give them to God. When we pray for other people it is not our responsibility to change them, our only responsibility is to release them to God and acknowledge their innate divine nature.

The Prayer of Gratitude – When we pray, do we always

ask for things or do we often forget to be grateful for our present blessings? That which we acknowledge, that which we praise increases. Acknowledge your own health, your present prosperity, your present warm and open relationships with other people. Concentrate on what is presently a blessing in your life instead of being concerned about what you do not appear to have.

An inner clue to prayer success is when we feel peaceful, calm, and inwardly secure and content after prayer. If we pray and still remain fearful or anxious after prayer, we have not prayed enough. Prayer should continue until we experience a sense of release and even a sense of inner joy and gratitude.

The Meaning of Contemplation

When we flow our attention to a subject or a theme with the intention of wanting to gain insight, this is contemplation. In the *Yoga Sutras* contemplation is defined as *concentration, meditation, and insight.* That is, contemplation takes into account these three processes. Meditation means steady flowing of attention to the object of concentration. Usually, we meditate in order to experience Pure Awareness. But, the same process, when directed to an object about which we want to know something, is called contemplation.

As we contemplate, we may or we may not actually be involved with the thinking process. Contemplation may merely be examining a problem with the hope of gaining insight as a result of either discernment or an intuitive perception. Read *The Teachings of the Masters of Perfection* (the section on the *Yoga Sutras*) for a complete and detailed explanation of the contemplation process.

When we read a book, if we contemplate the meaning of what is written, we acquire insight into the author's original intention. In some instances, what the author meant to communicate may be missed or not seen by the reader. By attuning ourselves to the mind and consciousness

of the author we actually experience the understanding he had while writing the book. Then we know what he knows and the communication cycle is complete. When we release our preconceived notions about the nature of God and actually contemplate the reality of God, we acquire insight and understanding. When we contemplate the nature of the soul we experience inner realization.

We were born with the capacity to know the truth about life. We would not even be interested in discovering the truth about life if we did not have the capacity to know. Some people do not even care to know the truth about life. I am firmly convinced that once we are awakened sufficiently to want to know the truth about life, we can know it in this life-cycle.

A great essential, if we are to make the most of our present opportunity on the enlightenment path, is that we give ourselves every advantage. We have discussed the importance of removing all known obstacles from the mind, feeling nature, body, and environment. Why should we spend most of our time and energy working to overcome obstacles when we can, with firm decision, clear them once and for all? It is important, also, that we study only clear and truthful philosophical materials. At a recent seminar a student asked my opinion of a set of books which purport to share actual reports of the life and teachings of the masters of the East. I had to explain that much of the information was, no doubt, valid, but the claim of the author that the sayings and teachings were taken from actual spoken instruction was false. The author, in this instance, claimed that the materials were the result of personal encounters with the masters in order to make the books more credible. Yes, there is some truth in many such published works, but why should we spend time and energy on such treatises when we have the more reliable written records by enlightened teachers? I understand the great desire on the part of truth students to acquire all useful information, but this is where our discernment comes into play. Again, let us be reminded, *truth is that*

which is so about that which is examined. Therefore partial understanding will not serve our purposes. What we require is total comprehension. We do not have to settle for partial knowing when perfect knowing can be ours.

One of the reasons for various religious philosophical systems is that sincere people have, over the centuries, examined the nature of Reality and have explained matters as they concluded them to be. Of course, such philosophical speculation is useful because it challenges the spirit, but one on the enlightenment path will only be satisfied with clear understanding. What is the personal result of clear understanding? Freedom and creative living in this or any world . . . this is the personal result.

Two Major Obstacles on the Path

Two major obstacles to spiritual success are *ego-motivated will* and *disobedience.* My guru constantly taught the importance of selfless-motivation-to-action and being attentive to the basic principles which alone assure spiritual freedom. When we allow ourselves to be driven by compulsion, ego, and the drive for power, we make a major mistake. When we do not obey the instructions given us in the scriptures we compound the problem. After we have been instructed in practical matters we have an inner knowing about just how we should think, feel, act, and relate to others and our world. If we do not abide by what we know is best, we are sure to suffer the consequences. We cannot live contrary to natural law and prosper. If we disregard the laws of diet, rest, and personal cleanliness we are sure to suffer physical distress. If we do not abide by the rules of social interaction we cause conflict between ourselves and others. If we harbor negative feelings we poison the system and restrict soul activity. If we cling to destructive or useless thoughts and opinions we clog our mental process. If we are forever grasping, clinging, and holding onto life, we cannot experience the open flow which is the experience of conscious people.

Going all the way with God should be our ideal. Why should we settle for partial understanding and partial happiness when we can experience the total process? Our certain destiny is to be awake in God. No soul can miss this ultimate experience. We may despair of ever attaining the goal, we may avoid the goal for a while, we may even work frantically to "reach" the goal, but no one can possibly miss the final experience. We might ask, "If God is omnipotent (all-powerful), why, then, does not God just see to the immediate awakening of all souls? The truth of the matter is that God *is* all souls. As every soul God is awakening gradually through human beings. This awakening is a process and takes place in time. Sometimes, the process results in pain and inconvenience for people because the soul must often be challenged. Every challenge is an opportunity to learn something. Every time we learn through challenge we are that much more able, that much more conscious, that much more enlightened.

The "sometime" pain may be due to our own unclear reaction to what is happening to us and around us. Our lack of understanding is the cause of such pain because life does not intend for us to suffer. Sometimes we are challenged, shocked, and disappointed by what unfolds about us. Sometimes we are challenged, shocked, and disappointed by what occurs within us. Every step of the way we have the opportunity to examine, to analyze, to learn something from the unfoldment process. The "sometime" pain may actually be physical because of the working, at deeper levels, of strong creative energies in the system which are moving in the direction of refining and perfecting the nervous system and physical body. I am not suggesting that we should expect pain and discomfort as part of the unfoldment process but that it sometimes occurs. Many mystics have told of the real inner pain they experienced as a result of soul awakening. They have spoken of mental and emotional anguish due to their having to handle unexpected change. They have, at times, spoken of physical pain because of strong energy flows. Satya Sai Baba, as

a boy, experienced violent alterations in consciousness as the soul nature forced its way into expression. Krishnamurti has written of long occasions of physical pain, experienced as the result of what he called "the process." Many new students on the spiritual path report a feeling or a sensation of pressure or mild pain in the body when they have become involved in a program of study and meditation. Sometimes body-reactions to energy flows results in pressure being felt at one of the chakras, especially the third eye center, or the crown chakra. Many years ago, when I began my training with Yoganandaji, I experienced unexpected inner changes. A few weeks after I met him my energies were stirred and I experienced, for a few weeks, strong changes in moods and mental attitudes. My yearning for God-realization became very intense. Meditation, sometimes for five or more hours at a sitting, was easy and joyful. Inner vision blossomed and cosmic awareness was experienced. For several weeks, during one episode, the top of my head seemed open to the sky and I knew that I was but a temporary inhabitant of this mortal body. These experiences were not the result of visualization or auto-suggestion, they simply occurred. I know what the yogis are saying when they mention these processes because I have also experienced them. During those early years of intensive meditation I experienced being one-with-the-universe-because-I-was-the-universe. You and I *are* the universe, because God is expressing as all that is. When the mind is cleared of all restrictions and when we experience unbounded awareness, we know the truth about who and what we are. I have not experienced levitation of the body but I have experienced levitation of the soul; the latter experience is a matter of being removed from the body and mind involvement, and, when this occurs, one knows one's real nature.

We only "believe" ourselves to be a mind-body event when, in truth, we are free spirits with the ability to use mind and body. We are, also, if we know it, able to handle energy-mass in time and space, and therefore we are able

to be free in the universe. By energy-mass, I refer to objects or things. Haven't you noticed that you really feel good when you are in command of your personal environment? When you drive a car, type well-done letters, water your lawn so that the flowers bloom and say "thank you," prepare a creative meal, balance your check book and pay your bills with money left over, respond to whatever challenge emerges in an appropriate manner . . . don't you really feel good about things? This is what we are talking about when we refer to energy-mass. Ten times a year we prepare, print, and mail *Truth Journal* magazine to about ten thousand people. To do this we have to order the paper, order the envelopes, write and design the magazine, take care to see that typesetting, printing, and binding is done well, address the envelopes, stuff the envelopes with the magazine, bundle the mail, take it to the local postal outlet, and then process the incoming mail which results from the process. This is just one frequent process and it takes careful attention to detail by many people involved. This is moving energy-mass through time and space. We all move through time and space. Yesterday was yesterday, today is today, tomorrow will be tomorrow. Do we flow through *time* or does time *flow*? Some people are still working on that question. The current opinion is that time is part of the total process. It can take a "long time" for events to unfold or time can be cut-through and, so, we have a "miracle."When you and I visualize a project and see it as completed and it unfolds in perfect proportion, in due time, we say this is how things work. When simple faith results in an immediate cure, the mind cannot accept what it receives. I have seen Sai Baba materialize solid objects (prayer beads, rings, pendants, food) and, he says, he "takes" the free energy about him and molds it into form through intention. That is, he *intends* that free energy forms as he wants it to be formed and it occurs.

We read in the *Bible* that Jesus converted water into wine, walked on the water, and raised the dead (brought the soul back into the body). We read in the *Bible* that

small pieces of cloth that had been "prayed over" became a point-of-contact between God and people. Even, so it is written, persons were healed when the "shadow" of the master fell on them. We all know about the power of suggestion and how such imput can influence the subconscious level of one's mind. But, what about the power that flows from a point-of-contact? This matter of what happens is a matter of God-to-soul communication.

Our own faith (our own belief) is a powerful influence. But when we speak of God's influence, we transcend human concepts and we move into realms which mind cannot understand. Yet the soul understands because the soul is God expressing.

Because you are God in expression, I know that you understand the truth.

"Today and Everyday I Flow With Life and I Go With God. God is the Reality of All I Behold. I Am Content to Go With God, Always."

"The life we live is God's life.
God's purpose is our real purpose
for being in this world."

Chapter 7

TOTAL DEDICATION To GOD And GOD'S HIGH PURPOSE

Even a little quiet reflection will enable us to clearly understand why our lives are not ours alone; our lives are God's life and we should think in terms of what God wants of us while we are here in this world. It has been said that one of the reasons for so much human misery is that so many people are frantically striving to experience personal happiness and they do not know that the person they are trying to make happy has no individual existence! As the wave does not exist apart from the ocean, so we do not exist apart from God. Of what value is it, then, for us to spend so much time and energy in the direction of personal goals if we do not have a greater awareness of Life's true meaning and direction? In our current lesson I would like to direct your attention to some very basic and realistic matters. While I am sharing with you I will also be closely examining my own inner thoughts, feelings, and inclinations.

Before you read any further you will want to have a

pen or pencil handy because this will be an involvement lesson. You will want to participate fully in order to derive full benefit from the process. Whenever a question is asked, write your personal response on a sheet of paper. This process will bring us down from abstract realms into the here and the now. Are you ready? (*Did you write down your response to the question?*) Here we go:

How Long Do You Expect to Live
During this Current Earth-Visit?

We are but visiting Earth, you know. We have come from inner space and we shall one day return to inner space. This is how it is. This is the truth of the matter. Birth into this world and our exit from this world are but incidents. From the cosmic perspective our birth and body-death are small happenings. Our real life is God's life. The taking on of a body and the leaving of a body is a common occurrence. Look about you and become aware of the fact that well over three billion people are now on the planet and, one-hundred years from now, they will be replaced by even more people. You will be replaced. I will be replaced. A very few people live beyond the age of seventy years. Look about your world and notice the thriving panorama that is nature. See how the trees, the plants, and the flowers grow . . . and then are replaced. See how the animals and the insects and the other living beings come and then go. This is how relative life flows. As long as we are in relative consciousness we cannot escape the laws of the natural world. *Relative consciousness* refers to an identify with the ebb and flow of nature. There is another level of awareness possible to us; the true cosmic sense can be experienced, during which we see how things are from the overview. This is how God sees the world-process. This is how God experiences the world-process as His own personal expression.

Did you answer the question? How long do you expect to live during this current Earth-life? Write your answer

now, because this is an occasion of honesty. Keep your written records private, because your inner self-examination is personal, between you and God.

Where did we come from? How did we get here? Why are we here? Where are we going after we no longer function here? Does anyone know? (*Are you writing down your answers?*) The masters tell us that we are of the nature of God and that we are here because of God's intention. When our parents cooperated we were drawn into involvement with a body. It is a relative happening that when there is the appropriate uniting of male-female influences, conception occurs. After conception, through a most remarkable process, a body is formed, nourished, and born. How does Life (God) make possible the beautiful result in just a few weeks or months . . . depending upon the particular form being produced? Human beings require only about nine months to bring forth a new person. Some animals require more or less time in order to almost-duplicate themselves. A newly born infant will have characteristics of both parents, and, as we have all observed, there is usually a distinct "quality" that shines through. This special quality is the soul nature which makes each body-form unique. One teaching is that when sperm and ovum connect, an astral light is produced which attracts body-seeking souls. This makes sense, because how else could souls be drawn to a body-connection? Trillions of souls (seeking human form or being drawn in the direction of simple-involvement) are *floating* about the astral atmosphere. There is little problem for such life-units because so many male-female partners are freely participating in Life's process.

The universe, itself, is a sexual-electrical phenomenon. From the Oversoul into material expression, the total involvement is a matter of positive and negative influences. Without interacting influences nothing can happen. Without interacting influences things would simply remain without change.

Some people are fated to live just so many years be-

cause this is how their mind and body are programed. The tendencies and inclinations are already influencing the lives of such persons. If one will become more conscious (more aware) and if one will learn to particpate with life-enhancing forces in nature, then fate can be thwarted. Correct diet, adequate rest, freedom from undue stress, an open mental attitude, freedom from emotional conflicts, and above all, superior soul-realization enable one to rise free from conditions which formerly restricted or impelled.

What Do You Expect to Accomplish Before You Leave this World?

Moving from the cradle to the grave with a minimum of pain and seeing to body needs only is not a very creative or idealistic goal for a conscious person. We have all come with purpose. Some are here to learn lessons. Others are here to fulfill promises and to make useful contributions. A major attainment for everyone is to consciously realize the nature of God. I am sure you have things you feel you should do in this life-cycle. We all have such dreams. We all want to leave our world a little better than we found it. Well, then, *what are we doing to accomplish our purposes*? Have we:

Seen to Our Needed Education? – Unless we were born with the natural aptitude and talent to accomplish our purposes, we have had to acquire the necessary training. We have had to learn to function in relationsip to our world and we have had to learn to be effective. If we have the will to do something and we do not know how to do it, we can still acquire the needed education.

Established Our Priorities? – Have we made a list of important things? Have we emphasized what is essential and eliminated (or, at least, put to one side) all that is not essential? If we have not yet made such a list, now can be a most useful time to do so.

Really Done as Well as We Could? – Sometimes it is easy to blame external conditions: people, circumstances,

inappropriate timing. But, during our occasions of self-honesty, we really know whether or not we have performed the fullest and best of which we are capable. Very few people actually do the best they can do. Most people are using only a portion of the real ability. Think of what we could accomplish if we would use every available unit of spiritual, mental, and physical ability at our command! Think of what we could accomplish if we really dispensed with all non-essentials and concentrated only upon what was useful! I am not suggesting that we review our past and become swallowed up in self-pity or strong feelings of regret, but I do recommend that we reflect a little upon our past actions. How much more would we all have accomplished if we had not wasted our time and energy in purposeless activities? Perhaps, even how much money (or substance) would we now have for useful purposes if we had been a little more prudent? We can learn from the past. We can determine to duplicate success-cycles and to avoid failure-patterns. How much more inner understanding would we now possess if we had made wiser use of our available time for the purpose of intelligent study and quiet contemplation? How much happier some people might be if they had been more unselfish and more trusting of Life?

Our Sometimes Need for Intentional Self-Discipline and Useful Action

A proven way to move out of a purposeless life-pattern is to intentionally do something in a useful direction. It is easy, while in conditioned consciousness, to become addicted to routine and inertia. A living pattern may be comfortable, but it may not be creative or life-enhancing. And, sometimes, what we interpret as calmness is really laziness or dullness. Here are some suggestions:

Streamline Anew Your Study and Meditation Program – Collect those books and study aids which you intend to study over the next few months and plan a definite pro-

gram of reading. Decide just what your daily meditation routine is going to be and then be consistent in your practice.

Do Things Correctly and On Time – Whether it is the job you do or just the needed duties at home, whatever needs to be done . . . do it correctly and do it on time. In this manner you will build into your system the pattern of attention to detail and you will learn to utilize time to your greatest advantage.

Put Essentials First – Whatever is of prime importance, see to it first. See to your spiritual health, your mental and emotional health, your physical health, your personal relationships, and your relationship with your world. We are not selfish to see to our own well-being because, unless we are healthy in all respects, we cannot really contribute much of value to our world.

Share With Others Each Day – When we are really open to God's influence and direction, everything we do will be in harmony with the world enlightenment process. To assist in the opening of your consciousness, do something everyday for the spiritual welfare of others. It may be that you pray for world enlightenment each day after meditation. It may be that you pray for some person each day. It may be that you speak an encouraging word to another in his time of need. It may be that you withhold judgment when you see or hear of something you consider improper or unwise. It may be that you use your time and financial resources in the direction of the spiritual welfare of others. Whatever it is that you feel led to do, do it with the consciousness that it is God doing it through you. One of the most useful things we can do for ourselves is to assist others to know the truth about life. We do not expect a reward for such assistance; it is when we are unselfish that we experience a greater clearing of mind and consciousness and a deeper sense of cosmic consciousness. Since it is the natural inclination for an enlightened person to work for the spiritual good of others, it is only reasonable that, when we emulate that which is natural to an en-

lightened person, we learn to experience how it is to function at that level of understanding. We cannot "pretend" soul awareness, but, by living as an aware person lives, we gain insight and our soul nature is awakened.

Something Else to Do With Complete Attention and Involvement

In some enlightenment traditions of the East it is recommended that students on the path write, each day, a portion of scripture or some truth-revealing theme. I know of some Yoga teachers who ask their students to write their mantra in a notebook and write one-hundred mantras or even one-thousand mantras each day. When we visited Japan in October of 1978 we were shown through one of the large pilgrimage shrines of the Seicho-No-Ie movement. The shrine to which I refer here is just outside of Kyoto. The spacious grounds at this spiritual haven are beautifully landscaped and the main hall, where frequent programs are offered, seats over five-thousand people. Downstairs, the purpose is not "public" at all; the purpose is private. Here can be found several nicely appointed small rooms. The only furniture to be found in these rooms are low tables at which devotees sit for quiet reflection while they write in a notebook. What are these retreat members writing? They are copying the words from their sacred scripture, *The Holy Sutra*. Many years ago Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi composed a short essay in which he set forth the Truth about man's spiritual nature and his relationship with God. Members are advised to read this *Sutra* every day. On special occasions they are advised to copy from the text and write the *Sutra*, word for word, in their own handwriting. This is an excellent discipline and an excellent way for one to really contemplate the inner meaning of a spiritual message. It is so easy for us to read past an item of importance when we skim through a book or a printed message. Here are suggestions in the direction of personal experience with writing a sacred message:

Select a Treatise Which is Meaningful to You – Select a favorite chapter from the *Old Testament* or the *New Testament.* Select a chapter from the *Bhagavad-Gita.* Select a chapter from your favorite truth book. If you want to use one of our writings, I can suggest the theme, *The Realization of Spiritual Perfection.* You will find this at the back of our title, *The Teachings of the Masters of Perfection.*

Use Good Quality Paper and a Pen Which Gives a Clear Result – Remember, we are involved with God and Truth, so we do not want cheap or poor-quality materials to be involved. God-energy *is* the essence of all materials, but a brighter aspect of God (that aspect which tends in the direction of completion) is expressed as quality materials.

Speak Aloud as You Read and Write – The spoken word can be whisper-soft, but do speak the words as you read them. This will more totally involve you in the process. As you read, contemplate the meaning of the original author and attune your mind to his (or her) mind. In this manner you will capture the "intention" of that person and therefore gain access to the level of understanding which first inspired the published work.

Write With Deliberate-Speed and Full Awareness – Write at a speed which allows a clear and (as perfect-as-possible) written copy. If your handwriting is like mine, you might think of forgetting the project from the beginning. Do not despair, just write as clearly and as carefully as you can. The transmission of the doctrine from mind to hand can be a useful experience. Remain fully conscious while you perform this exercise and be sure you are in an environment which allows you total privacy.

When copying a chapter from a scripture or any material that takes ten to twenty minutes, a one-time process is sufficient. I would recommend that one do this on a planned schedule. I do not suggest that one do this each and every day from now on. The better way might be to write a short theme (always the same one, in order to be drawn into the study and contemplation of the message).

One might plan to write in this manner once a day for a two or three day personal retreat session. Or one might select a short theme and write it daily for one week. A theme that could be handled within a ten or twenty minute time-span could be decided upon for a full month of daily attention.

Here is something to consider . . . and I do this frequently: *What else do you have to do with your life*? By what *else* I refer to what are we going to do with our time, our energy, our creative abilities, our money, our other resources? What do we do with our lives? Some are involved with fun and games, and this can be fun and can even be useful towards intended purposes. Much can often be accomplished during quiet and innocent hours of open communication.

The idea is to be fully aware regardless of what we are doing. Our activities do not have to be divided between what is spiritual and what is not spiritual involvement. All that we do can be a conscious experience. Whatever dulls the mind and confuses us is not useful to our higher purposes. Whatever we do that increases our awareness and our understanding is useful to our higher purposes. I have noticed, when around enlightened people, that even when they are relaxed and in the midst of a quiet social occasion, there still remains a sense of purity and gentle awareness of the goodness of life. When one was around Yoganandaji, even if the duration was brief and the occasion one of social interaction, one left his presence with a sense of having been uplifted and strengthened. One felt better about himself after having been with my guru.

Haven't we all known people who have affected us in this manner? And haven't we appreciated the experience and blessed those through whom the radiance of God was evident? Isn't it nice to meet people who are so self-sufficient and so self-confident that they require nothing of us? Such people, being so appropriate and caring, benefit all of us with their presence.

What To Do If We Sometimes Lack Self-Inspiration-To Action

We have all experienced occasions when our best intentions remained as good intentions, but we were not able to follow through with useful action. With the exception of those who are unconscious (dull and without any interest in life) or who are psychologically disturbed, all people really intend to do better than they perform. Good intentions are to be admired, but intentions must be outpictured as useful action if anything worthwhile is to occur. Here are some things we can do in order to be inspired to purposeful action and involvement:

Attend to Daily Routines – Whether one feels like it or not, one should follow through with intended plans and routines. By getting into action the mind is often stimulated in a creative manner and one begins to feel an inner aliveness.

Associate With Others Who are Creatively Involved with Life – Now and then spend some time with people who are creatively involved. Attend your local truth church or center. Be where the creative involvement is! Attune yourself with alive people by reading about them or by thinking about them. Instead of remaining identified with life-without-purpose, identify with conscious and purposeful living.

Arrange Your Personal Environment So That It Reflects You – We are here speaking of the real you, the inner you. When our environment is arranged as we would like it to be, we receive reinforcement from it. Order, harmony, and everything arranged for the most efficient manner of living is characteristic of an enlightened person.

Above All, Put God First – As we surrender the sense of self-consciousness to the awareness of Cosmic Consciousness we transcend limiting influences. We are in partnership with God, whether we consciously know this or not. The more aware of this process we become, the more full and meaningful our lives will be.

Here is something to contemplate:

"From this moment on, I am fully conscious of my true nature and of my relationship with God and my world. From this moment on, I am consciously involved with God and my world. God, as and through my life, fulfills His purposes easily and harmoniously."

"Whatever we acknowledge becomes increasingly real in our lives. Let us recognize and call forth the truly worthwhile."

Chapter 8

The VALUE of RECOGNITION and THANKSGIVING to BRING FORTH and ESTABLISH ALL THAT is TRULY WORTHWHILE

When Jesus was confronted by seeming difficult circumstances, we are told that he spoke the word and called forth that which he felt to be the most useful and desirable condition. This is the method used and taught by other enlightenment teachers also. How is this possible? What is the process? Will the process work for anyone?

In the following pages will will examine this matter of *recognition and thanksgiving to bring forth and establish all that is truly worthwhile*. If we are "conformed to the world" and if we are established in traditional thinking, we cannot understand the principles now under examination. It is so easy, when in traditional consciousness, to accept that which appears to be obvious and real and to think that circumstances cannot be changed. What the average person deems to be real is not real at all; that is, it may be manifesting but it is not permanent. Some conditions express because they have been caused. If this is the case, then by neutralizing the cause we can see a change in outer expression. Other conditions express and

persist because those who experience them see them as they do and maintain that opinion and belief about the reality of the condition.

We know that thoughts, feelings, and convictions about one's state of health can actually cause physical conditions to manifest and persist. A person with an "illness consciousness" will experience illness and a person with a "health consciousness" will experience health. This extends into all areas of experience so that, for instance, one with a "failure consciousness" will almost always fail and one with a "success consciousness" will almost always succeed. We might ask, "Yes, but what about the obvious? Shouldn't we accept it?" We have a choice in all matters. We can accept conditions as they appear to be; we can change conditions by introducing new causes; we can "see through" the appearance and call forth the desirable aspects of a circumstance.

As truth students our responsibility is to live as the masters advise us to live and not to live after the patterns set by those who are not enlightened. It is through practice and through patient application of the principles of right understanding that we awaken to the realization of freedom in our world. The abilities of which we speak are not given to a chosen few, these abilities are innate to all of us. Soul abilities need to be cultivated and we need to practice in order to become proficient in dealing with our world. This is why we learn to recognize and give thanks for the blessings which are ours and for the blessings which can be ours for the acknowledgement of them. We often tend to mildly acknowledge our blessings while giving our major attention to "what's wrong" with our world. There is a basic mental law by which we experience our world and it is this: whatever we acknowledge we tend to make more real. This is so because we give energy to the circumstance and we anchor attention upon it, almost to the exclusion of all else. If we would but turn our attention from "what's wrong" to "what's right" we would, in due time, magnify and increase our heart's desire. If a plant is

not nourished it will fade away. If conditions are not nourished they, too, will fade away. This law of life runs through all of nature and because it is a law of life it can be depended upon. Man requires nothing more for his inner peace and eventual filfillment of soul destiny than this: that he be attuned to God and that he learn to work in harmony with the laws of mind and consciousness. One might ask, "Don't we require friends, influence, recognition, and all of the other supportive conditions we have grown accustomed to believing in?" Here is the answer: when we are attuned to God and in harmony with the laws of mind and consciousness, all outer things will be automatically adjusted. The key is to work from the inner to the outer, because inner causes are sure to reflect as outer effects or circumstances.

Surely we recall the words of Paul in his epistle to the Philippians (4:8), "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsover things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things or of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." We may jump to the conclusion that discord is true because we observe it. We may conclude that sickness, poverty, and exploitation is true because it has been brought to our attention. According to the teachings of the masters, the only thing that is true is that which is in accord with harmony, health, prosperity, and cooperation. Anything else, while temporarily manifesting on the screen of time and space, is due to man's lack of understanding about how to work with God's laws. The truth about each one of us, for instance, is that we are made in the image and likeness of God. It may appear that many people are less than God-like, but this is due to their lack of understanding. It does not help such people for us to also believe in their unknowingness. Have we thought about this matter? Are we reinforcing limitation in the lives of other people by believing limitation for them? Are we holding them in bondage because of our belief about

them? I am not suggesting that we feel guilty about our friends and associates who seem to have problems, thinking that we are the cause of their conditions. We cannot change another's level of understanding against that person's inner will. But we do not have to add to the weight of delusion by confirming their problem. All we have to do is to know and believe the highest and best (that which is true) about others and God-as-them will do the rest, in due time, when the soul destiny is to be fulfilled.

A very practical reason for our self-training in this matter of seeing the "true" conditions is that what we concentrate upon we also tend to instill in our own mind and consciousness. Even an almost pure person can become confused as a result of forever observing the results and appearances of unenlightened consciousness. One teacher said, "I see God for myself and when I see God for myself I see God reflected all about me!" We sometimes forget the simple axiom: "That which is visualized tends to materialize." The firm pictures in the mind tend to externalize and our inner speech (interior conversations, usually not even monitored) molds our environment.

These Principles are Taught to Thousands of People in All Walks of Life

The principles of which we now write have been taught for centuries, usually by exponents of religious and philosophical traditions. But they are also taught to thousands of people every week by motivation teachers and leaders of awareness classes. A popular phrase is this: "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and man can believe possible, man can achieve." Of course, we understand that what a person conceives must be in accord with nature's laws. For instance, man cannot fly to the moon without life-support units and a vehicle in which to transport the body. But, working with nature's laws, man can go to the moon and beyond. We will see travel beyond the moon in a few decades. One might visit the planets in his subtle

body or one might "see" the planets in the mirror of third eye vision, but to actually transport the body one must abide by the laws of the material universe. So, it is literally true that if we can conceive of a project in harmony with nature's laws and if we can believe it possible of attainment, inspiration and know-how can make it possible. Most people, however, are not planning space exploration, they are more concerned with learning to live without restriction on planet Earth. The same laws of mind and consciousness apply. Here are some ideas and examples for practical application:

1. *For Enlightenment and Self-Realization* – Even while continuing your study, your disciplines and your regular meditations, remember that you are a child of God and that you are already inwardly bright, clear, and perfect. The only reason for the performance of disciplines is to clear the mind, refine the nervous system, and purify the body. The real *you* is already liberated and enlightened. The real *you* knows the Truth and knows the Reality of God.

2. *For Greater Creative Mental Ability* – First, assume total responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Next, study the laws of mind and consciousness and then patiently apply them. Even while working through challenge and temporary difficult times, do not despair. What you can conceive . . . what you can picture . . . what you can accept . . . what you can be thankful for . . . will externalize in your experience. It cannot be otherwise.

3. *For Emotional Harmony and Inner Peace* – While responding in an appropriate manner to whatever occurs, realize that you do not have to emotionally react and become the victim of feelings. Live in the moment. Do not regret the past. Do not grieve over that which you have no control. Do not cling. Do not reject. Be clear, settled, and inwardly serene and at peace at all times, in all situations. We may ask, "How can I do these things when all about me seems so oppressive or so difficult to comprehend?" We do it . . . by doing it.

4. *For Physical Health* – Remember that you (the soul) are superior to mind and body. Live from the level of soul awareness and then abide by the laws of nature. This is the most certain route to health of the body.

5. *For Harmonious Relationships* – See the good, the pure, the "real" in all people. Avoid those who are temporarily misdirected and who are destructive. Do not judge anyone but do not become involved with people who are not in tune with your highest ideals. Deal with others as you would like to be dealt with. Be open, honest, fair, and fully supportive.

6. *For a Truly Prosperous Life* – Do everything to insure the first five essentials and be open to the flow of Life through you. You will naturally thrive, flourish, and be successful in all useful ways.

Yoga teachers say "Experience alone is the highest teacher." We may hear the words, we may read useful advice, we may even inwardly know the process, but if we do not enter into the stream of experience, we will never really know for certain what is true and what is not true. For some, the way is easy and joyful. For others, the way is filled with challenge. For a few, there is pain because of the need to make drastic inner changes (and even outer ones). Everyone pays a price. The kingdom of heaven is free and without price, but the sacrifice of lower tendencies so that higher ones can prevail is often painful. It is not for nothing that some saints have told of the torment of the inner fires during their years of spiritual discipline. It is not that we must suffer to merit enlightenment; it is just that, in some instances, the struggle between the higher and the lower (the soul and conditioned tendencies) meets with resistance. Conditioned mind does not want to release its domination over "things as they are" and the partially awakened person does not always want to give up certain special ways of doing things or enjoyable relationships. What is pain to an unawakened person is pure joy to the inner nature because the inner nature really wants to be allowed unrestricted expression.

The majority of us must undergo our cleansing and inner transformation while being involved in social interaction. Ours is the *moderate way*, the way of working out our obligations while attending to inner evaluation and awareness. The *extreme way* is simply to take off to a secluded retreat and give total attention and be consciously involved in self-purification as a full time process. Most people who try this way find their enthusiasm weakening after a duration and they settle into a routine of semi-comfortable dullness. They remain as they are, with little or no change, while "pretending" to be deep in study and self-examination. The *mild way* is the way of just letting matters unfold as they will until the soul is finally aware. This is the way of "the world" and can take almost-forever. The *conscious moderate* way and the extreme way are very similar because, if one is conscious about what is happening, it does not matter where the body happens to be; all situations become opportunities for insight and greater freedom.

My way has always been the blend of moderate and extreme. To be moderate is to stay within certain bounds. To be extreme is to go beyond the normal range. I have, for the most part, remained within certain bounds because I have felt that God can be known by one who lives in a social environment. On the other hand, I have lived the extreme way: paying attention to duties but remaining aloof from usual social involvements. This blend of *ways* is evident in my present lifestyle. I travel widely and mix with individuals and groups for the purpose of fulfilling my call to the minstry. Yet when not involved in public-ministry-work, I remain alone. After a tour, whether it be of short duration or of several weeks, I remain at Lakemont and, sometimes, do not leave the grounds for many weeks at a time. When I am here it is a matter of total awareness of inner and outer duty, and I seldom observe holidays or weekends for the purpose of taking leave of writing, planning, or whatever is essential. I am not a slave to work, but the work I do is the ministry God has given

me and it is the major involvement for me. I am a private person. I like to be left alone unless I am really needed. My inner Self knows that the greatest need is a soul need and I am always ready to respond to a soul need. Personality needs do not concern me at all. I do not like to play personality-games, such as "Did you hear . . .?", "Let me tell you something about so-and-so . . ." or "Why don't you and me get together on this special business deal?" A most obvious personality-game which does not even draw from me a response is when one walks out of nowhere and is most demanding. I understand the situation. The demanding person is insecure. Usually, also, the person who is overcompensating is doing what is currently referred to as a power-trip. He is asserting "Now, I've got you!" The easy way "not to be got" is to simply not be there. That is, you hear and see what is appearing but you do not acknowledge it. Let things happen how they must after that. Just be sure you are somewhere else. And be happy with your own inner relationship with God and life.

It is obviously up to each person to find his personal lifestyle and to move through circumstances in a manner which is comfortable and in harmony with personal soul needs and destiny. Some people require more challenge than others, in order to learn to cope with life and to bring out their inner potential. Other people are so conscious and so free of need for "learning lessons" that their way is the way of creative work and useful service. How do we find out what our area of useful service might be? We examine our inner inclinations and our natural aptitude for service. We pray about it, if need be, and remain open for guidance. We look about us to see what needs to be done and if we feel inclined to do it, we do it. Always, we work from the inner awareness of our soul nature, knowing that when we are in harmony with Life's plan for us, the power of God flows through and around us to such an extent that we know we are co-workers with God and that we are not the doer at all.

The Nourishing Influence of Conscious Thanksgiving

To acknowledge and be thankful for our present blessings is to increase them. To acknowledge and be thankful for our present blessings nourishes the soul nature and clears the mind and emotional nature of unwanted patterns and tendencies. We know we are being truly thankful when we feel an inner surge of happiness and rejoicing, a mild degree of soul-elation. We all have things for which to be thankful. Perhaps you might feel inclined to make a written list of all of the things (circumstances, relationships, understanding, etc.) for which you can be thankful. Dwell on these things and feel a pleasurable inner surge of rejoicing. Be thankful to Life for Its supportive and nourishing influence in your life. Minimize the small problems and challenges and magnify the true and the useful. In time, you will live in a heavenly state of consciousness. Whatever talents you have, utilize them to the full and they will increase. Whatever substance you have, use it wisely and it will increase in volume and force of flow. Even if you seem to have little, at the moment, in the way of ability, understanding or substance, begin to use what you have now to the full. Bless and be thankful for what you do have, instead of worrying about what you do not seem to have. We are not suggesting that one be content with little, but that one acknowledge what is present and then see it increased.

What if one seems to have nothing for which to be thankful? Then, be thankful that from seeming nothingness, everything can come forth. The worlds were produced from the inner realms. Everything we perceive has come forth from invisible (to the eye) spaces. If you do not have what you feel you should have as a divine being, then call if forth by inwardly acknowledging it and blessing it. This is the way of pure faith. Unwavering faith is a powerful influence in our lives. Remember how Jesus gave thanks before some of his "miracles" took form? When

we inwardly acknowledge a thing as done, all that remains is for the seed to sprout and then to grow into outer expression.

How can we have faith if we have never seen faith in action? We can believe the words of the great masters of the ages who have taught the importance of faith. We can believe in God. By looking about us and recognizing the intricate workings of nature, we can know that there is an Intelligence and a directed Power in operation. We can test the principles of faith and creative visualization. As we test the principles we are sure to experience results and this will build our confidence. Success in doing results in experience and confidence. If we forever think about doing something but never try to do anything, we can never have the experience.

Circumstances can be changed. Painful memories can be cleansed from the mind as a result of higher understanding. Emotional conflict can be resolved. Fear and anxiety about the future can be replaced with trust.

Practice Living in Heaven from This Moment Onward

The moment to moment choice is ours. We can select which level of consciousness we are going to experience. We can decide to rest in faith and to see what "can be" and, in this way, we can live in heaven even while walking on earth. The dream of fulfillment in a distant future is the way of those with shallow faith. The vision of fulfillment now and forever is the way of those with unshakable faith. The only way to experience mastery is to be the master of states of consciousness, feelings, thought patterns, and intentional actions.

When you meditate, after you have become settled and relaxed, think like this: "I am made in the image and likeness of God and I am perfect now, even as God is perfect. I am fulfilled now, even as God is fulfilled. I am now possessed of a clear mind and a radiant body. I am now in

the flow of God's grace, and I experience harmony in all relationships and easy success in all useful ventures. I am thankful for this understanding and for this realization. I rejoice to know the truth!"

Often we make the mistake of working at meditation. We make the mistake of trying to attain something or of trying to overcome something. The more direct way is to immediately acknowledge that which is true, at the soul level, and to bring that into visible expression.

To help others to realize fulfillment, see them as they truly are, as divine beings. Share with them your consciousness of truth, as you live in harmony with the highest ideal. When appropriate, educate them in the principles of right thinking, wise action, and meditation. We are sure to be involved with the enlightenment of others because there is only One Being in the universe and we are all but waves on the ocean of that Being. When we awaken we assist in the awakening of all expressions of God. When we prefer to be less than fully conscious, we contribute to the unconsciousness of all mankind. This understanding is the reason why enlightened teachers are involved with the spiritual welfare of the world. Such teachers say, "Wake up, my brothers and sisters. Awaken from your sleep of mortality and come into the realization of truth. Knowledge is available. All you have to do is to look in the right direction."

Here is something to remember: sometimes all we have to do to see useful change in our lives is to cease recognizing what we don't want to experience. If we are so clear in understanding and self-acceptance that we do not consider limitation or undue personal challenge, we will not attract it into our lives. If we do not accept discord into our mental-consciousness environment, even if we are presently in the midst of discord, the condition will clear without fail without our having to work to change any person. What we are, in mental condition and in consciousness, is what we will generally experience.

Divine Magnetism

When the ego-sense is diminished and the soul-sense predominates, we will then be possessed of divine magnetism and we will draw into our experience all that is in accord with soul-realization. Therefore, glorify the God-nature of yourself and release your mental and emotional hold on all that relates to conditioned mind. When we live out of soul consciousness we are then in tune with all other people on the planet who are similarly aware. This is the true secret brotherhood who work for the redemption of humanity. One cannot gain access to this brotherhood in any other way than by living as a true initiate, as one who is enlightened. Enlightened people are attracted to each other and they pool their energies for higher purposes.

God, the Oversoul, is inclined to express through more and more enlightened people. To the degree that we are open and to the degree that we recognize that which is true, to the degree that we are thankful for what is recognized and experienced do we play our conscious role in establishing all that is truly worthwhile on earth.

Let us know:

"I recognize the truth about Life and I rejoice in thanksgiving!"

"Perfect love dissolves every barrier and solves every problem. Surrender to God opens the soul to cosmic consciousness."

Chapter 9

LOVE and SURRENDER OPENS ALL DOORS

What is the one central message which runs through all enlightenment teachings? What is it that all the spiritual masters stress above all else? It is the importance of love and surrender in order that the true life of the soul might be known.

What is suggested is not a pious and sentimental emotional need but, rather, a conscious relationship with the deeper processes of Life. We are so often involved with our own thoughts, wishes, and personality-feelings that we are not truly open to what Life would like to do through us. Some are naturally inclined to love and surrender, while others, it seems, must be driven to a point of genuine crisis before realizing that "relaxation into the greater flow of Life" is the real and better way to go. Remember, we have often said that it is Life's natural inclination to unfold, to express, and to complete Its purposes. Life, however, cannot complete Its purposes through us if we are not open to the inclination of the soul in this direction.

In our resolve to love more and to surrender more

fully to Life, we are not to avoid our practical matters (self-examination, conscious living, study, and meditation), but we do this as preparation so that we will be open and receptive when the grace of God begins to express. During our practices we are reminded that we are not trying to make anything happen, we are but preparing the inner environment so that we might experience a conscious and natural awakening of the soul.

Some say they do not know how to love because they do not know what love really is or what is expected of one who loves. Many people find that when they are able to surrender to a cause, to an ideal, to the superior will and intelligence of Life, or to God (as they understand God to be), there then arises, from within, a sense of wonder, awe, richness, and fullness which they can only describe as love. If love is natural then surrender is automatic, but when love is not natural then surrender results in the inner experience of love. There is nothing immature about being able to surrender to Life and to experience true love. On the contrary, surrender and love, when experienced, results in the supreme maturity. We cannot say that Jesus was an inwardly rejoice when we hear of those who truly love God. It cannot be educated-idealism which results in our genuine happiness at the prospect of final surrender to Life. No, what we inwardly acknowledge is that we will experience true freedom and purity of mind and being when we renounce the sense of separate existence and consciously move with the current of ultimate goodness.

Love and Surrender Can and Will Solve all Relative Human Problems

I have, as a result of the ministry with which I am involved, often been asked to mediate between conflicting group-interests among church members and their ministers. I have seen "good Christians" become very *unChristlike* during such occasions. The refrains are almost endless in variety of positioned-statements. The leader of one fac-

tion will state, "Our minister is a nice person, but he does not teach the message as we want to hear it." The leader of another faction will state, "Our minister teaches beautifully, but his personal life is not so beautiful." Someone else will offer, "We don't know what we want, but we want something different from what is now happening." Other minor disputes will be over such matters as who decides the advertising budget, should we move to a "better" location, why we should not move to a "better" location, and then the battle runs down to just plain ego and personal power-space involvement. Love is the answer, love and surrender to the ultimate purpose. Here are a few words from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a scripture of India which predates the Christian *Bible:*

> *He, who is free from any sense of ill will, who is friendly and compassionate and free from egoism; who is even-minded in all situations. Who is ever content, self-controlled and unswerving in his devotion, is sure to become attuned to the Supreme Will. That person who is free of any grasping and any tendency to withdraw from life (who sees life as it is) and who has given up personal desire, is in tune with Reality. That person who has risen above the concepts of good and evil and treats all people alike and is always even-minded and free from attachment. That person who does not react to blame or praise, who is controlled in his manner and speech, taking life as it comes, is in tune with Reality. Those who with faith, consider the Absolute as the supreme goal, and who live wisely, are truly in tune with the Infinite.*
>
> *Bhagavad-Gita 12:12:20.*

In every instance, the great masters teach, we are to learn to surrender all inclinations and tendencies which cannot contribute to freedom of the soul. One of the great inspirational stories available to us is that of a simple man

who, at the age of forty years, entered a monastery of the Carmelite Order in Paris around the year 1650. Nicolas Herman of Lorraine is known to history as Brother Lawrence. He lived and worked as a monk for forty years immature person. We cannot say that other enlightened teachers, past and present, represent weakness or lack of true soul freedom.

Does Anything Prevent the Ability to Truly Love and Fully Surrender?

Many have "tried" to surrender to Life but could not experience full surrender. Many have "tried" to love but could not truly love. Why is this? Perhaps it is due to the personality "I" attempting to do what only the soul can do. Others are, so they have admitted, afraid to love and surrender. "Perhaps I will not ever be the same again!" one might exclaim. "Perhaps it won't work!" another might share. There may even be the inner feeling-sense, "I want the benefits of surrender, but I still want to be the 'me' I know." Why is it that we are often afraid of our ultimate good? Why is it that we often allow mental speculation to stand in the way of our destined fulfillment? To be direct about the matter, here is the answer: "We resist and we struggle against our destined fulfillment because we are still identified with the ego-sense, with the sense of having independent existence and reality." This sense of having independent existence and reality is, of course, due to our misunderstanding. God alone is the Supreme Being, we are rays of God. This is the highest truth according to the great masters of spiritual science.

Isn't it a strange situation in which we find ourselves? Isn't it sort of a wonderful comedy to know that we inwardly suspect the truth but, yet, we outwardly dramatize either indifference or a sense of "I have a right to my own opinion on the matter"? Perhaps one reason for the relaxed cheerfulness obvious with so many enlightenment masters is that they see through the immature games and routines

of their students and they remember, too, how it was with them when they dramatized similar games and routines. I sometimes think that, at a deeper level, some seekers subconsciously exclaim, "You almost got me that time, God, but I outmaneuvered you !" Even when we play our games we know, at the soul level, that sooner or later we must abandon hope concerning our ability to win against God because God will absorb us eventually. That is, God will dissolve the ego-sense and we will consciously experience our God-nature. Perhaps we should inscribe over the entrance of our personal meditation chamber the following words, "Abandon all hope, you misguided soul, God will win the final confrontation!" Life always wins and that is our assurance of salvation.

We may not always be able to explain love with mere words, but we know what love is when we experience it. Also, we yearn for true love because even the word and the implication of the word evokes such strong inner soul-response. The ideal of soul-surrender evokes a similar inner response. We have an innate (inborn) awareness of the truth about life. We know that our destined end is to flow into the river of God-expression. We marvel and we and shared, now and then, his personal experiences and thoughts with serious seekers on the path. One such seeker, Monsieur Beaufort, made public some correspondence between himself and Brother Lawrence. A portion follows, in which Brother Lawrence shared:

> That he had always been governed by love, without selfish views; and that having resolved to make the love of God the *end* of all his actions, he had found reasons to be well satisfied with his method. That he was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of God, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.
>
> That he had been long troubled in mind from a certain belief that he should be damned; that all

the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary; but that he had thus reasoned with himself about it: *I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God, and I have endeavoured to act only for HIm; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God, I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him.* That this trouble of mind had lasted four years, during which time he had suffered much; but that at last he had seen that this trouble arose from want of faith.

That since that time he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. That he placed his sins betwixt him and God, as it were, to tell Him that he did not deserve His favours, but that God still continued to bestow them in abundance.

That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence; but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly excites us to it without any difficulty.

That he expected after the pleasant days God had given him, he should have his turn of pain and suffering; but that he was not uneasy about it, knowing very well, that as he could do nothing of himself, God would not fail to give him the strength to bear them.

That when an occasion of practising some virtue offered he addressed himself to God saying, *Lord, I cannot do this unless Thou enablest me*, and that then he received strength more than sufficient.

That when he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault, saying to God, *I shall never do otherwise if You leave me to myself; 'tis You must hinder my falling and mend what is amiss.* That

after this he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

That we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs just as they happen. That God never failed to grant it, as he had often experienced.

That he had been lately sent into Burgundy to buy the provision of wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him, because he had no turn for business and because he was lame and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. That, however, he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. That he said to God, *It was His business he was about*, and that he afterwards found it very well performed. That he had been sent in to Auvergne, the year before, upon the same account; that he could not tell how the matter passed, but that it proved very well.

So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for His grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy, during fifteen years that he had been employed there.

That he was very well pleased with the post he was now in; but that he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he was always pleasing himself in condition by doing little things for the love of God.

That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times; that he retired to pray, according to the directions of his superior, but that he did not want such retirment, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God.

That as he knew his obligation to love God in all things, and as he endeavoured to do so, he had no need for a director to advise him, but that he needed much a confessor to absolve him. That he was very sensible of his faults, but not discouraged by them; that he confessed them to God, but did not plead against Him to excuse them. When he had done so, he peaceably resumed his usual practice of love and adoration.

That in his trouble of mind, he had consulted nobody, but knowing only by the light of faith that God was present, he contented himself with directing all his actions to Him, i.e., doing them with a desire to please HIm, let what would come of it.

That useless thoughts spoil all: that the mischief began there; but that we ought to reject them, as soon as we perceived their impertinence to the matter in hand, or our salvation; and return to our communion with God.

That at the beginning he had often passed his time appointed for prayer, in rejecting wandering thoughts, and falling back into them. That he could never regulate his devotion by certain methods as some do. That nevertheless, at first he had meditated from some time, but afterwards that went off, in a manner he could give no account of.

That all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless, but as they serve to arrive at the union with God by love; that he had well considered this, and found it the shortest way to go straight to Him by a continual exercise of love, and doing all things for His sake.

That the greatest pains or pleasures of this world were not to be compared with what he had experienced of both kinds in a spiritual state; so that he was careful for nothing and feared nothing,

desiring only one thing of God, viz., that he might not offend Him.

That he had no scruples; for, said he, when I fail in my duty, I readily acknowledge it, saying, *I am used to doing so; I shall never do otherwise if I am left to myself.* If I fail not, then I give God thanks, acknowledging that the strength comes from Him.

Yes, Love and Surrender Opens All Doors to Life

When we pray and when we meditate we experience the deepest soul experience when we love God and surrender fully to the activity of God within us. When devotion is strong the soul qualities begin to express themselves and the finer energies within the body are stirred and quickened. Soul awakening and the flowing of subtle currents in the body result in transformation of the mental processes as well as the physical body itself. Soul awakening lifts us above mere sense concerns and enables us to function wisely in the world while not being overly identified with it. God, the Cosmic Soul, is inclined to express through and as each one of us because we are particularized units of God awareness. When inner restrictions are removed and resistance is no longer present, God then expresses. It is useful to be reminded that even though we experience working personally in this relative sphere, it is really God who is working and doing everything. All of our spiritual disciplines are productive when we love God and surrender to God's will for us.

Mental confusion and emotional unrest can be removed from our lives as a result of love and surrender. Isn't it true that most of our inner conflicts are due to the fact that we are too self-centered (in the personality sense)? Isn't it true that much of our mental unrest is due to the fact that we do not trust enough, or that we are fearful because we feel that we are alone in the world? We all

know how harmful are the effects of anger, jealousy, guilt, regret, envy, a sense of rejection, prejudice, pride, and a smug sense of being superior to others. Medical research has clearly concluded that emotional unrest can result in physical illness. And isn't it true that most of our emotional problems are due to lack of maturity? One might, with some justification, assert that his present tendencies are due to past conditioning and experience. However, we know that it is possible to change mental patterns and to change habitual reactions. We do not have to remain limited just because this has been our pattern for many years. When we truly love, we see other people as expressions of God, and there can be no major problem, then, between them and us.

If we respect our body temple (because we understand that we are made in the image and likeness of God and that the body is our contact with this plane of expression), we will naturally be inclined to see to the basic needs of the body. There is increasing emphasis today regarding correct diet and useful exercise. When we see to our spiritual health and to our mental and emotional health, as well as attend to the laws of natural living, we are certain to experience physical health. Are we surrendering to nature's laws? Or are we resisting the very way of life we know to be the ideal? By giving up our narrow opinions and by surrendering to Life we experience true freedom and enter into a more cosmic way of living.

Are we competitive with others? Or can we cheerfully allow others to be themselves? Are we supportive of others? A useful experiment for one is to decide (for a week or a month) to be fully supportive of other people and to avoid pettiness, competition, and conflict. During this experiment we can also avoid judgment, fault-finding, and gossip.

A recent indication that hints of personal restriction is a general national feeling that money is limited and, perhaps, more difficult times are just ahead. Financial indications appear in cycles, there seem to be "good times" and there seem to be "stress times"on the national and

global scene. What many of us have noticed is that some people who are living well are still a little influenced by fear of the future. Fear is, in itself, the greatest threat to peace of mind and to prosperous living. It is the natural inclination of the soul to thrive, to prosper, to be successful. Yet, fear and uncertainty can cause one to function at less than optimum ability. There is no limitation in the Mind of God. There is no decrease in God's Substance. The energy of God changes form, but the energy remains constant in quantity and quality. We, of course, advise prudence and a practical approach to living, but we recommend that one not become reactive to appearances, claims, opinions, and theories. Just walk a little closer with God. Just pray a little more lovingly. Just surrender completely and become attuned to the inner reality. One's outer life always reflects the inner condition.

One might say, "But I'm so very troubled! I just don't know where to turn!" I understand. I understand that a personal challenge may take one of many forms. One may be in financial trouble. Or perhaps the challenge is physical or emotional. Perhaps one feels far from God. Let us read from *The Book of Psalms (69: 1-3)* to understand that challenge is not unique to modern man: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." That plea must sound a little bit overly dramatic to some readers, but others will surely relate to it. The final words are of interest: "*while I wait for my God.*"

We are advised, always, to do the best we can with the intelligence and the ability which is ours. We are also advised to remember that we are not alone in this world. We are in partnership with a Power which is intelligently directed. If we will but love without reservation and surrender completely, we are sure to experience the full measure of God's reality in our lives.

Love and surrender opens all doors. This is my personal

testimony, based on experience, and it is the teaching of the saints whose lives are our example.

Something to contemplate and experience:

"I now joyously . . . without fear and without undue expectation, surrender fully to God. My resolve is to love God and all expressions of God completely."

"God is the reality of all that is. With God first, all outer conditions are harmoniously adjusted."

Chapter 10

In ALL RELATIONSHIPS PUT GOD FIRST for TRUE HAPPINESS and FULFILLMENT

If we ask a person what is his heart's desire, he will frequently answer, "My heart's desire is to be happy and fulfilled." Many people admit that they are not happy and they are not fulfilled. Others will admit to a sense of reasonable happiness and fulfillment. A few will affirm an inner satisfaction and contentment. True happiness is soul happiness and true fulfillment is fulfillment in God.

It is the natural tendency of the soul to move in the direction of happiness and fulfillment. This is because the soul's true nature is pure joy due to the experience of inner freedom. A soul which is restricted in any way is naturally inclined in the direction of freedom from restriction. It is this urge in the direction of true happiness and complete freedom that gives rise to the religious impulse in human beings. Even animals seek out that condition which, for them, allows a degree of happiness and the fulfillment of their instinctual urges. Many human beings are also driven by instinctual urges and, in this manner, experience a relative degree of happiness and fulfillment. In human beings, if the experience of fulfillment is based upon the satisfaction of sense needs and environmental

requirements, during quiet moments the soul urge will still yearn for permanent spiritual satisfaction. The reason for this is that the soul innately knows that permanent happiness can only be the result of enlightenment and of a conscious and responsive relationship with God.

God is the Cosmic Soul and we are individualized expressions of God. God manifests as the world and God regulates all universal processes. Souls, as expressions of God, participate in relative spheres as God-in-particularized expression. Some philosophers, who are restricted in understanding, say that man seeks a God outside of himself because he, himself, feels powerless. It is true that this is the sometimes beginning of the spiritual quest for many people. The real reason we seek God, however, is that we inwardly know the truth about ourselves and we yearn to consciously express it. The truth (*that which is so*) is that we are made in the image and likeness of God, since we are particularized viewpoints of God. Because we innately know this we are not satisfied with relative happiness and partial fulfillment.

The Practical Approach

We, of course, are advised by teachers and spiritual masters to be as practical and self-sufficient as we can in all matters. We are, after all, endowed with intelligence and ability, and we have the memories of experiences and past successes. There are times, and we all know this to be true, when the best we can humanly do is not sufficient and we have nowhere to turn except to that Power which indwells us and is omnipresent and omnipotent. At such times, as many can readily testify, when we are able to relax the conscious mind and rest in the conscious awareness of God's living presence, there is an Intelligence and Power that moves onto the human scene and, somehow, works things out far better than we could have ever imagined possible. Why is this? It is because the Cosmic Soul is naturally inclined in the direction of cosmic fulfillment.

The Cosmic Soul (God) is ever self-contained, but the relative expressions of God (the universe and all therein contained) are undergoing transformation and moving in the direction of purification and evolutionary fulfillment. This is why, when we are in tune with life's purpose, we are reinforced by the Power that nourishes the universe.

Does God love some people more than others? No, God is not capable of prejudiced choice in this matter of loving. God *is* love, in that there is an attracting aspect innate to God which pulls all relative things back to the Source. To the degree that we are open to this attracting influence of God, we experience the love of God. All people are under the influence of this attracting aspect of God, but those who are more open and more surrendered have a stronger conscious experience of it.

Jesus taught (*St. Mark 10:27*) his disciples the great truth that a person in human consciousness (restricted consciousness) is limited, but, for God, all things are possible. There are stories of some saints who are so God-realized that they simply relax and remain anchored in God and everything that needs to take place in their life experience unfolds in perfect proportion. I am practical enough to recommend goal-setting and attention to details we can handle. I am also awake enough to know that most of what is, in the long run, really useful is due to God's grace: the activity of the Holy Spirit in and around us.

Little do we know regarding a personal destiny which is already planned at deeper levels. Years ago I was told an interesting story:

A woman in a large metropolitan city was a quiet seeker on the path but lacked real direction. A friend of hers invited her to an evening meeting to be conducted by a then prominent truth teacher whom she had never seen. While napping during the afternoon hours, the woman felt very ill and despaired of feeling well enough to attend the meeting. During an interlude of twilight sleep she inwardly saw the face of a smiling man and she felt an infusion of

electric current which awakened her. She felt completely well! Upon entering the lecture hall, later that evening, the teacher on the platform looked directly into her eyes and smiled that same beautiful smile. It was the same face, the same person, as in her twilight dream-vision.

There is only One Mind and there is only One Being. Human mind is a fragment of the One Mind and we are but viewpoints of the One Being. While we are restricted by the conditionings and instinctual tendencies of the mind, we experience limitation. When we are, for one reason or another, liberated from these conditionings and tendencies, we are open to the good will of the Cosmic Soul, however It wishes to express.

Our personal experiences are not usually dramatic, but haven't we all experienced occasions of intervention which have resulted in our highest good? From whence does this asistance flow? Often the deeper level of our own soul awareness becomes active in moments of special need. At other times the influence of the Cosmic Soul will directly or indirectly (through other people) come to our rescue. This is evidence that God is supportive and that God is fully aware of our personal needs, even when we seem temporarily incapable.

Various testimonies give evidence that there is a suptive influence in this world; a person meets the right friend or business associate at the most appropriate moment; money comes from an unexpected source just when it is needed; insight dawns at the last moment; a new discovery is made and proves to be timely and useful to humanity; healing is experienced in a seemingly "miracle" manner; and soul-satisfying peace invades one's entire being during an instant of thoughtless quiet.

We have but to objectively observe our natural world to see God's love. We observe the seasons as they come and go, we experience the change in weather and atmosphere, we witness all life-forms reproducing after their own kind. The order and harmony in nature, to maintain and balance the evolutionary flow, is marvelous to behold.

God is fully aware of what the great plan for the universe is, and, *as* all of it, God is fulfilling a predestined purpose.

Doing Our Part to Allow God to Express

We often study, meditate on a regular basis, and follow suggested routines, but we also often fail to live consciously throughout each day. Sometimes our attitude is that study and attention to certain routines might cause a spiritual effect. That is, we live out of human (conditioned) consciousness hoping that something will eventually happen. Study can clear the mind, meditation can awaken us to deeper values, routine can help us order our lives. However, often there is more that is expected of us.

What, for instance, is our attitude about life in general? Are we cheerful and do we anticipate near and future experiences? Does life have meaning and purpose for us? Short of a conversion experience, unless we take practical steps to order our lives so that we can live in harmony with natural laws, we will continue in the same limited pattern of experience. We may be in need of healing of the body, but are we doing what we can do to allow nature's forces to flow and nourish the body? Do we eat correctly, rest sufficiently, exercise according to need and live so that we experience little stress? The body requires adequate nourishment, regular rest, and suitable exercise. Vital energies cannot flow through the system properly if we are tense, confused, mentally unstable, and harboring negative emotional conditions. Fear, anxiety, resentment, and jealousy actually poison the body. Courage, calmness, love, and respect actually encourage secretions of glands and organs and contribute to health of the body. It is estimated by many physicians that the greater percentage of physical ailments are directly related to mental and emotional problems.

What about our relationsips with others? Are we open and giving or are we closed to open communication and expecting too much from others? Frequently one can,

through self-examination, discover that he has been playing a role. Perhaps the role is that of a "victim"; in this instance one imagines that he is the total effect of circumstances or the actions of other people and is forever blaming externals. A common error among students of metaphysics is to blame present conditions on past causes and to assume that nothing can be done to change what is currently expressing. Many people have learned to experience mental and emotional health simply by forgiving the past and by learning to initiate intelligent and worthwhile actions in the direction of useful goals. In this way they learn, through experience, that the future is the extension of the present and that their life experience can be modified. To set useful goals one can honestly examine his inner feelings and think in terms of "What should my life really be like?" Then one can discard thoughts, attitudes, behavior, and relationships which are not in accord with the idealized lifestyle. One must be sure to replace discarded thoughts, attitudes, behavior, and relationships with useful ones.

We are not alone in this universe. We have a partner to whom we can always turn and this partner is God. God is already our very life, but many are not yet consciously aware of this truth. This is why we suggest that one put God first when thinking in the direction of happiness and fulfillment. In this manner one learns to flow with the great energy of the universe; ideas will come, inspiration will dominate our consciousness, doors will open and that which was formerly impossible will be a reality. This is the testimony of many people, and, if it is true for even one person, it can be true for every person. We are all endowed with the identical spiritual characteristics and we all have the potential of living in harmony with God's will. Past experience may differ, present conditions may differ, but God transcends past experience and present conditions. A person who is truly awake, as a spiritual being, also transcends past experience and present conditions. It is a beautiful realization to come into the understanding that we

have freedom of choice regarding whether we will remain in limiting conditions or whether we will emerge into freedom. Yes, we can choose daily whether to live out of human consciousness or look out upon the world from the viewpoint of being a free spirit!

A Meditation and Visualization Process for Positive Benefit

Here is an approach that many people find useful relative to changing the outlook on life. First, meditate deeply and be abandoned to the process, be absorbed in Pure Consciousness. Second, come out of meditation slowly and *educate* the mind in the process. While relaxed in a semi-meditation mood, inwardly know, "I am made in the image and likeness of God. My essential nature is Pure Being." Then, in progressive order, know that your mind is flooded with Divine Light, your body is flooded with Divine Light, and that you are on friendly terms with all mankind and with every expression of nature in this world. *Know* this to be true and *feel* this to be true. Then, rest for a while in this *knowing* and *feeling*. Afterward, when spontaneously inclined, emerge fully from the practice session and calmly involve yourself in whatever life is presenting to you.

During the day, when you feel that you are getting off-center, be still for a few moments and be reminded, "I am made in the image and likeness of God. God is my very existence and all is well. I am God-inspired in all that I do and I behold life unfolding before me and around me in perfect harmony." Such inner affirmations are not intended as exercises to struggle with conditions; they are meant to bring the attention back to the Source and to restore one to balance and inward peace.

One might use this meditation and visualization process relative to goals and to the solving of problems. After meditation sit quietly and inwardly *see, know,* and *feel* that you *are* the person you were meant to be. Open the

windows of your mind and accept health, fulfillment, success, and happiness. If one has been trapped for a long time in a sense of limitation, this exercise can be the opportunity for the mind and feeling nature to be educated anew. By creatively assuming that which we know to be most desirable, we actually neutralize negative subconscious patterns and we awaken the soul nature. Notice, while practicing, how inwardly joyful and free you feel as you assume the highest and best! This positive response is evidence of the soul's natural inclination in the direction of freedom.

Once we have become settled in the new state of consciousness we have but to live consistently from that state. Our mental attitude, our beliefs and opinions, and our mental conversations... tend to externalize as experiences. This is why the masters teach that man has the great potential of consciously determining his life experiences. For many people success is merely a matter of assuming responsibility. How responsible are we regarding mental attitudes, thoughts, feelings, actions and response to environmental situations? In the final analysis we *are* personally responsible for our mental attitude and for how we think, feel, act and respond. Nothing can influence us unless we allow it. When we say, "I can't help the way I think, feel and react," we are passing personal responsibility over to external conditions or to internal subconscious patterns. When we do this we are willingly becoming the effect of inner or outer causes. In this way we have made the choice and we will have to live with it until we decide to take responsibility for our lives.

Let us read from the *New Testament*, Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The mental field must be cleansed of all that is not in accord with the divine life if God is to be able to express through us. This is the central teaching of enlightenment masters of all traditions.

I am convinced that human relationships will be harmonious if there is a spiritual basis for such relationships, if each person will acknowledge the divine nature of the others with whom they relate. I am convinced that any useful creative enterprise will be successful if one thinks in terms of genuine service and then renders that service in quality and quantity. I am convinced that ultimate fulfillment and true happiness is dependent upon our relationship with God first, because if we do not acknowledge the reality of God we are working with the shadows of this manifest world.

Daily, as we allow our attention to flow to the source of Life within us, we return consciously to our awareness in God. As we emerge from meditation the power and intelligence of God then becomes operant in and through us and, in this way, God's will for us is revealed.

Let us know:

"I am a Life-giving spirit, made in the image and likeness of God. I am, therefore, as God is in every attribute and quality. For as long as necessary, I daily experience personal transformation as my mind is renewed by the light of God. I acknowledge that, before long, I will remain permanently in the clear realization of the truth about Life."

"Wisdom is the principal thing:
therefore get wisdom; and with all
thy getting get understanding."
– Proverbs 4:7

Chapter 11

A PERSONAL LETTER to ALL WHO SEEK the TRUTH

This "letter" is shared with every person who sincerely seeks the Truth: that is, total understanding about the nature of Life. Whether you are new on the path or more advanced, I trust you will find a message here for your personal good.

First, let us agree that our quest for knowledge and the resulting freedom is our major goal in life. This goal is not the goal of all people on the planet at this time, for many people have a destiny which involves them in routine pursuits because this is in harmony with their present state of consciousness. Out of millions of human beings on planet Earth, only a small percentage are consciously seeking liberation of consciousness. I would not consider this matter to be unfortunate because surely God knows what His plan is for humanity. After all, God is playing all of the roles through and as every person and every natural manifestation. Out of the many who are consciously seeking, a small percentage are truly in earnest. Some seekers have a mild interest in study and contemplation, some are more

goal-oriented, and some are totally dedicated to experiencing understanding. Those with a mild interest tend to read, examine, and contemplate now and then, when the inclination surfaces. Those with moderate interest, who have as their goal eventual enlightenment, are more regular in their periods of study and meditation practice, but they are still not totally surrendered to the process of inner transformation. People who are totally dedicated will do all they know how to do in order to experience a conscious relationship with God. It is this latter group which makes the most responsive disciples because they will follow instructions and attend to needed disciplines.

I feel it is important that we understand that our spiritual quest and our relationship with God is very personal and private. While we may enjoy the fellowship of others on the path we cannot, if we are intent, allow others to influence us in ways which are not constructive. We cannot allow the opinions of fellow seekers to cause mental confusion or to sway us from our intended path. We do not need to discuss our inner perceptions and unfoldment experiences with other people because our perceptions and unfoldment experiences are unique to ourselves and have meaning only to ourselves. Once we are settled upon our course of action, relative to study and practice, we can then be totally dedicated to the path and totally surrendered to God. The intelligence of the soul (the intelligence of every person) is identical with the intelligence of God because each soul is God expressing. This knowledge is hidden or screened because of mental confusion and inertia, and the enlightenment experience is but the emergence of this knowledge to the conscious mind level.

We should, of course, respect all useful spiritual disciplines, but we must acknowledge that we cannot incorporate all disciplines and methods into our personal practice. The essentials of all disciplines are the same; the outer forms and routines differ according to tradition and personal preference. Even while being faithful to our chosen discipline and program of study, we should be careful that

we do not fall into the mental trap of feeling that our way is superior to all other ways. This can lead to a sense of self-righteousness and narrowmindedness.

For Clear Instruction and Correct Information We Always Go to the Source

The Truth resides within us, at the soul level. Some seers have realized the truth as a result of waiting in the silence until the mental field cleared. Truth is then revealed from within according to the receptivity of the person. It also helps for one to be reminded of the Truth about life by reading the scriptures and other useful source books. But, always, we are best advised to be sure that the author of any text is sharing clear information based on his own realization. A seeker on the path does not need the extra confusion which can come as a result of reading theory and opinion which is shared as factual information. There are many writers and speakers who mean well but who are not yet clearly realized. They then share some insight along with much misinformation. Even with good intentions, one who is spiritually blind cannot possibly assist another on the path. As we study the words of the wise we are advised to ponder them, to contemplate them, and to finally arrive at our own understanding. Yogananda's guru, Sri Yukteswar, said, "Realization is not final until it is experienced in the very atoms of one's being."

The source of knowledge is the field of Pure Consciousness. When we meditate correctly we flow our attention to this source and then rest. During this experience we are one with the essence of Life. Upon emerging from meditation we can experience deeper understanding filtering into the conscious layers of the mind.

If we feel that it might be useful for us to receive personal instruction we can pray for guidance and then be led to a truly conscious person, who is able to explain to us the Truth (that which is so about Life) clearly and directly. If we are fortunate enough to meet such a conscious

person we should listen with the utmost attention to what he has to say. If we put ourselves in the position of being a student or disciple we should follow, to the letter, each and every instruction we receive. A conscious person who plays the role of a teacher is not concerned with power or ego; such a one is only concerned with awakening the student to the experience of understanding. In the ideal relationship it is God playing the role of the teacher in order to awaken Himself as the student. One should contemplate very carefully the matter of becoming a disciple of a qualified guru. One can go from teacher to teacher and can learn from each one. Once the guru-disciple relationship is agreed upon, it is permanent. When I met Paramahansa Yogananda I felt immediately the close rapport and permanent attunement with him and his teaching tradition. I have come to experience that everything my guru said, about God and about my destiny in God, was true.

If we have prayed for guidance and God has led us to a true guru or an authentic and useful (to us) teaching tradition, this is God's plan for our highest good. We do not, therefore, have the personal freedom of making a choice in the matter. When God calls us to an involvement with destiny, if we are wise, we will enter fully into the plan provided. To avoid opportunity or to try it and then leave it is to make a grievous error in judgment. It is not that God will punish us for refusing His opportunity, it is that we create problems for ourselves because of our resistance to the flow of Life.

The Importance of Total Surrender to God's Will

I cannot tell you what God's will is for you. This can only be revealed to you through inner knowing or through outer signs. At times one might suddenly know what it is he has come to do in this life-cycle. A rare few know from early years what it is they have come to do and their

formative years are but the occasion for education and preparation. At other times, after prayer and being open to guidance, no inside response is felt but one will observe outer trends and events which seem to signal a course of action. If, by going along with the flow, one experiences a sense of inner satisfaction and an opportunity to constructively use talents and abilities, this can be taken as definite guidance relative to your plan and purpose in the universe. I can report that the only occasions when I have failed to go with the flow have been: one, I knew what to do but did not do it; two, I allowed myself to become involved with other people's ideas and wishes. For instance (1), we might have definite inner guidance but fail to act because of fear that we are not capable of fulfilling the demand to be made upon us, or we may intend to respond but we put if off until the moment has passed; (2), we may allow ourselves to become so involved with other people's activities that we become swept along with them, so that we become involved with their life-pattern instead of fulfilling our own.

I can only speak from my inner knowing and from my experience, and this is what I have realized to be true for me: the most fulfilling life is a life surrendered to God's will, as God's will is revealed to me. I have never been a group person. I enjoy relationships and open communication, but I have never needed strong support or emotional reinforcement from others. I do not reject support and reinforcement, I simply do not require it in order to function. My inner relationship is with God. Whatever outer relationship unfolds as part of God's good will is perfectly acceptable. To seek (from a sense of need) human relationships is not at all useful for one on the spiritual path. To cling to outside support is evidence of fear and evidence of lack of trust in God. The only way I know of to get through fear of the unknown is to face it, with God. God is our *inside* support because God is the Reality of our soul nature. If God prevails, what can possibly be a strong challenge? But it can never be a matter of, "I have God

with me so I am invincible!" . . . it must be situation of, "I will do the best I can and I will leave the final results to God." When we are totally surrendered to the activity and will of God we experience unusual happenings. Sometimes these unusual happenings are referred to as miracles because they seem to defy human understanding. Healing takes place which no one can explain, harmony replaces discord, money flows at the right moment to meet a pressing need, Cosmic Awareness floods the mind to reveal the ultimate insight. Who can fathom the ways of God and the ways of the soul dedicated to God's direction? It remains a mystery to all who are in human (conditioned) consciousness, but it is clearly known to the saints and seers . . . and to *ordinary* people who abide by God's easy guidelines to understanding.

If one is having a difficult time surrendering to God's will it may well be that a deeper prayer life is needed. Sometimes we can be too "mental" in our attempts to figure things out. What may be needed is more time in solitude, away from the pressures of daily living. We need not be anxious for an immediate answer to prayer. We cannot force God to do things the way we would like them done, we can only empty ourselves of thought and desire and then wait. If we wait long enough, in the silence, definite guidance will come. I recall my early years with Yogananda when I lived in Phoenix as a monk in training at a branch Center of his organization. For over three years, with the exception of giving classes and the occasional counseling session with a student, I was absolutely alone. I had no social life and no friends or associates with whom I had to communicate. My time was given completely to study, meditation, necessary duties, and silence. Those early years of training were not years of escaping from worldly responsibilities, they were years of experience in deepening the inner life. If we are not anchored in God-realization we will tend to live a superficial life and we will miss the most important experience God has to offer.

Recall how often Jesus went off alone to pray and to

contemplate, recall how the saints spent time in solitude, recall the often quoted words, "Seclusion is the price of greatness." A true devotee of God is never lonely. How can one be lonely when God is one's constant companion? With God we are complete, without God-awareness, no matter how active is our social calendar, life will be empty.

I am often asked, "What must I do to experience God-realization?" The answer is ever the same, "To experience God-realization one must renounce (release) everything in mind and consciousness which restricts the expression of the soul." Yes, one must depart from destructive ways and embrace constructive ways. One must leave, without regret and without looking back, everything which is not in harmony with the ideal life. Does this sound too drastic a step to take? Perhaps to one in human consciousness it does seem drastic, but it is the teaching of the great seers and prophets of the ages. When we renounce thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and associations which cannot contribute to our highest good we actually gain, we do not lose anything. By renouncing attachment we experience oneness with all that is. By losing the sense of separate existence (ego) we awaken to eternal life. As conditioned personality decreases, soul awareness increases. This is why total commitment to the spiritual path and complete surrender to God's will, as God's will is revealed, is the key to spiritual fulfillment.

If we do our part to prepare for soul unfoldment, that special moment will come when awakening is experienced. Devotion, surrender, discipline, prayer, meditation, and expectancy will result in a most receptive state of consciousness. Enlightenment can occur in a flash, at a moment when we least expect it. This is why we must be diligent, attentive, and aware. My most revealing experiences have occurred, not during the actual practice of meditation, but at a time when I was relaxed and open.

We may say that we are surrendered, we may say that we are open to God's influence, but do we doubt and are we afraid? Surrender and doubt cannot go together. Once

we are resolved to go all the way with God we must be courageous, self (soul)-confident, and trusting. God, as nature, nurtures and sustains us when we are in harmony with the laws of the universe.

A Most Common Confession

In correspondence and in personal counseling, the most common confession a person will make to me is, "Things are not going so well in my life," and, "I haven't been attentive to meditation, study, and the necessary things." The first sentence is the statement of the present condition, the second sentence is the reason for the problem. Why is it that we do not do the things we know we should do for our highest good? Why is it that we do not cooperate with nature? It may be that we are lazy. It may be that we are lost in self-pity. It may be that we have allowed ourselves to become disorganized and confused. Whatever the reason, the solution to the problem is to start anew with a program of intentional involvement with the basics.

We can ask of ourselves the following questions. How much time should I give to employment or creative endeavor? How much time should I give to family and friends? How much time should I give to recreation? How much time should I give to inspirational reading and to deep meditation? Our life does not have to be severely structured and our practices should not be mechanical, but there is this matter of our having to learn to establish our priorities. We should decide what is important and what is of little importance. Even Truth teachers and ministers (would you believe it?) often need to get quiet and examine their lives. Are we, as ministers, so busy *teaching* others that we overlook the importance of actually being the embodiment of the teaching? Are we, who are so busy helping others, seeing to our own mental, emotional, and spiritual health? We can only share out of our own consciousness, so if we are attuned to God, God's influence will express through us.

God's influence flows from us to the degree that we are consciously established in *Being*. We cannot use God and we cannot give God to another. We can only be inwardly settled in the realization of our true nature and then the useful transforming work will take place.

Going All the Way With God Through Us

The only "us" is mind and body, the soul nature is really God expressing through mind and body. Most people think of themselves as a mind or as a mind-body identity, but the Truth is that our permanent nature is Pure Consciousness. To the degree that God, as soul, is able to express through mind and body, to that degree are we enlightened and liberated. I would suggest to each reader that a decision be made now to enter fully into an open relationship with Life. There can be no half-way measure on the spiritual path, for such an approach will only result in but a small measure of success.

I would suggest that you enter into the stream of Life with total abandonment. By this, I do not mean that we should become lost in a maze of purposeless activity but, rather, that we hold nothing back in our surrender to God. When you are, in the eyes of the world, successful, give that success to God. When, occasionally, you make a mistake, give that mistake to God. That is, be self-honest about the fact that you were in error. If you have a problem, give it to God and God will solve it through you or through Himself as others. If you have a weakness, admit it and give it to God. God will help you in overcoming that weakness. Hold nothing back from God, for God knows more about us than we know about ourselves. God is the Universal Soul; therefore God is everywhere conscious, always. God never sleeps, except every few billion years (relative to our universe), when all matter is withdrawn into the field of God . . . before flowing forth again to manifest the cosmic dance.

We sleep because the body and nervous system require several hours each day to be prepared and balanced. With increasing enlightenment experiences, even though the body sleeps, we will experience inner wakefulness. I well recall a spontaneous enlightenment occasion of many years ago. I had spent a quietly constructive day, writing and walking on the beach. Retiring early in the evening, I slept without dreaming. Promptly at 2 A.M. I awoke and, strange to say, there were no thoughts in the mind. There was awareness. There was knowing, but there were no thought-connections happening in the mental field. I knew where I was and I could get up and walk about the house, but there was nothing from the subconscious memory field infiltrating the conscious level of the mind. Instinctual reflexes guided the body as it walked into the living room and sat down in a chair. Through the large picture window I could see the moonlight reflected in the ocean waters. The night was very still. No sound was evident, except for the background sounds of the air conditioning unit and hum of the refrigerator. I could clearly see, in the unlit room (with moonlight coming through the window) the television set, the chairs—all that was present to observe. But, the interesting thing was that, though I observed everything, it seemed to me then that everything was *one substance* and a chair was a chair only because I had agreed to name it thus. My body was a body but it was my temporary abode. My mind could function but it was not me. There was only the knowing of oneness. Joel S. Goldsmith, a powerful Truth teacher of recent years, used to speak of *Is-ness*. My conscious experience, during that interlude, was of *Is-ness*. It was an occasion of unexpected *samadhi* experience. *Samadhi* is a Sanskrit word which means that the mental waves have ceased, allowing the soul to *clearly be what it is*. For about an hour I *saw how life is*. Stripped of all names, all labels, all preconceived notions, I saw *what is*. *What is* is the Truth about life.

On other occasions, usually upon awakening at some mid-point at night, I have rested in a thoughtless condition

of reverie, half awake and not quite asleep, and have been able to see through the walls of the room and through the ceiling (so clearly that I could see the trees moved by the winds, and the clouds moving, and the stars shining brightly). Upon rising to look out through the windows, the prior perception had been confirmed.

How can we explain these things? Here is the answer: the soul is without restriction when it is free of mental involvement. And we are, essentially, omniscient just as God is omniscient. When we experience unbounded awareness (when we are not restricted by anything) we are not subject to any limitation related to the material world. When the soul is unfettered it experiences as God experiences. Does God limit Himself with names and forms? Does God allow Himself to be screened by appearances? God is just as aware of his universe as we are of our physical body (if we are truly conscious). This is not the occasion for us to enter into a discussion about the other realms in which God is involved. Man does not even dimly imagine the scope of God's influence. There are realms and dimensions which now exist and function which are outside of human comprehension. The unified field theory for which Albert Einstein struggled so long to explain in easy-to-understand terms is nothing more than what the seers of ancient times *clearly* explained. Mr. Einstein knew the answer; he did not know how to put it into a simple definition which would make sense to his peers. Had he lived a little longer, he would have been able to do it. I feel that he *knew* but that he held back the information because he was unsure about how his colleagues would handle the data.

When, many years ago, I was a helpful influence in planning Swami Muktananda's visit to Indianapolis (Indiana), I went to his room to make a courtesy visit. Swamiji was writing letters to his India contacts. I shall never forget his mildly-detached response: Muktananda glanced up from his writing and welcomed me with, "*God has given you everything.*" He was only speaking the Truth, and his

spoken phrase was reinforcement on the path. God *has* given me everything. God will also give you *everything*. He will give you (if you allow it) all that you require for your highest good.

Here is an ideal to contemplate:

> *"I am made in the image and likeness of God. God is my very life and I am now totally surrendered to the activity of God. I hold nothing back as I go forward with trust and joy."*

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

– St. John 15:5

Chapter 12

BEING CLEAR and EXPERIENCING TRUE AND LASTING PROSPERITY

What does it mean to prosper? To *prosper* means "to thrive, to flourish, to be successful." When an animal in his natural habitat is in harmony with his environment and with his destined role, that animal thrives, flourishes, and is successful. When a tree or a plant is in the ideal environment for its needs, it thrives, it flourishes, and it is successful.

In this brief chapter I want to examine, with you, some of the basic requirements for prosperity in the lives of human beings. Because this chapter will be brief and because I prefer to be concise when I write, you may read some things which will surprise and even startle you. Surprise and challenge can be useful now and then if the effect is to move us from self-limiting opinions, attitudes, and behavior patterns. If, as a result of reading this chapter (and, please, read it at least three times), you are personally challenged, so much the better. My time, then, will have been well invested in your future good. I write for myself because it clarifies my thinking. I write for you because you are just like me: you benefit from fresh information and ideas which can motivate you to positive action and involvement.

May I make a suggestion here? Before you read any further, get a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen and be prepared to make notes to yourself as ideas come to mind relative to your personal needs. In this way our time together can be an "action-experience" and the theme we now examine will be of greater value to you.

Do not fear; I am not going to ask you for money. I may invite you to become involved in available opportunities for your soul good, but the way in which you respond to what we will examine in the next few pages is a matter of your own personal destiny and must be in line with your own inner guidance. Everything we do on the spiritual path is a "secret" matter; it is between God and ourselves.

Are We Prospering or Are We Living in Limitation?

If we are thriving, if we are flourishing, if we are successful, we are prospering as God intended. If we are not thriving, if we are not flourishing, if we are not successful in our destined place in Life's plan, we have missed the point of our being here on the planet. Poverty, limitation, and failure are not the experiences for which any living thing is destined. When we are not experiencing fulfillment we are out of tune with the nourishing aspects of the universe. This is true for every expression of Life throughout the world. It is natural to prosper and be fulfilled. It is contrary to Nature's plan to be impoverished and limited!

In the plant and animal kingdoms some individual expressions suffer because they happen to be deprived of nourishment. In the animal world a few rare examples are psychologically disturbed, just as this condition is found among human beings. Even plants can be upset as a result of negative mental and emotional influences. Plants, animals, and human beings can be the effect of external causes. An aware person, a person who is truly conscious, is never influenced by what occurs about him. We can shut

out disturbing influences if we decide to do so. I have observed plants which seem to be able to maintain their dignity. We have all seen animals (cats, dogs, horses, cows, etc.) who learn how to protect themselves from unwanted contact by just going off alone and doing what they feel is best to do. We can learn from such observation if we are not too proud regarding our "superior" status in the world-plan.

In *The Gospel According to St. John* (15:5) we read an interesting and revealing message: "I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Jesus was speaking from the level of Christ Consciousness. He implied that people are nourished and are prospered when they abide in Christ Consciousness. Christ Consciousness is the awareness-intelligence of God, thus, if we are in tune with Christ Consciousness we cannot help but prosper.

It is a basic teaching that when we are facing severe challenge we are not to let the appearance, that which we see through the senses, cause us to become anxious and fearful. We are, of course, to do all we can do with our available resources and practical knowledge, but we are to remain inwardly serene and established in the certainty that God can bring harmony and fulfillment into any condition. If one has the consciousness of fulfillment one will either be led to initiate constructive action or will attract what is required to meet the need. Often Life intervenes in amazing ways through channels we do not know exist.

There are many truth students who possess the understanding of mental and spiritual principles but who have not acquired a practical education which would enable them to function more effectively in this world. Or they know the principles, but they have not yet learned to embody them. There can often be a great gap between knowing and doing and between knowing and experiencing. There is little point in our seeking greater knowledge if we are not using the knowledge we now possess. It is often

the case that one who fully utilizes his talents continues to grow and acquires even greater ability, while one who does not use his talents experiences a decrease in awareness and increasing limitation in his life.

Some years ago I met a man who had owned a modest hotel and had prospered during his years of managing it. When he retired he bought a house in Florida and settled into a routine of social interaction and pleasurable activities. He made a human error: he believed that because he had been successful in the hotel business he was also an expert in other business matters. His major "gift" to himself to celebrate his retirement was a large boat. Most of his extra money went into investments of his own selection. His investment decisions proved to be poor ones. Instead of seeking expert advice he sought advice from psychics who were less than prosperous and successful in their own right. Over a period of three years he lost his money and had to sell his boat and home to cover his losses. He married a woman who was financially secure but who dominated him and made life miserable. He had been a "truth student" for years and eventually died an embittered and disillusioned man.

I knew a man who was, he said, worth over two million dollars. He attended a New Thought church and was active on the board as well as on several projects. A fund raising drive was announced and a church representative invited him to lunch, offering him the opportunity of donating $100,000 to start the building fund in a positive manner. The man became angry and left the church. He said to me that he wanted people to love and respect him for himself and not for his money.

When Paramahansa Yogananda was working during his latter years to establish his organization on a firm financial basis, the organization was, as are most religious movements, funded primarily by the many students in the field who gave a little money now and then or on a regular basis. There were a few wealthy and generous students also. I talked with a man, years after Yogananda's passing, who

surprised me with his words. He said, "You know, our guru was very smart. He knew I had money but he never asked for it." I felt like responding, "Why should he have had to ask you for money? Why didn't you offer it to the work?"

Being Open to the Flow

Whether we refer to our path as New Thought, an awareness process, Yoga, or another name . . . we are still dealing with learning how to come into a conscious relationship with Life. There are many people involved with such groups who are prosperous, reasonably happy, and handling their relationships very well. Most of these people were doing well before they became interested in the enlightenment path. In the New Thought teaching there is considerable attention given to educating students and group members to unfold a prosperity consciousness. The reason for this is that so many in the movement are not personally fulfilled and they are not prospering; they are not thriving, flourishing, or being successful. We can often see why these people are out of the flow when we observe their usual mental attitudes, their general confusion, and the poor self-image they have of themselves. In many instances not only are the principles of correct thinking taught to students in need, but also instruction is taught in matters of prayer, visualization, and faith. Often there are "Involvement" programs during which the student is encouraged to test the principles and get into the flow of life by experiencing the process. One area which is a real challenge to many students is the matter of wise use of money. Some people have very little money and they tend to hold on to it or they spend it unwisely. Others have a more than adequate flow of money, but they use it all for themselves and seldom think in terms of sharing it with others in a positive and useful manner. I have seen people drop a dollar or two in the collection plate on Sunday morning and then go to a restaurant and pay five dollars for lunch. Others will say they cannot afford to contribute

to their church or teaching center, but they will waste many dollars a week on nonessentials or on impulsive buying.

Why is it that we cannot seem to establish our priorities and get clear on the matter of what is really important to us? Why is it that we often have to be reminded, inspired, and encouraged before we begin to share with Life? Why cannot it be a natural and spontaneous response? Are we so conservative, so fearful, so overcome with inertia that we need to be prodded before we will do what we should do of our own free will? I know a woman who, by her spoken admission, is "loaded" with money. She seldom gives any of it to an enlightenment work (unless she can be acknowledged and praised), but she is a soft-touch when it comes to sending generous checks to organizations who send her form letters requesting money for animal shelters. Before animal lovers descend on me with furious letters of "shame on you," it is important to understand that we do have a responsibility to maintain our world in a responsible manner. Certainly the animals of the world deserve our loving consideration and certainly we must maintain hospitals, schools, research centers, public parks, road systems, and all that is part of our social environment. But if we expend all of our energy to maintain "the world" and offer nothing in the way of thought, service, energy, or whatever is ours to offer for the awakening of souls, we have missed the point of being on the planet.

Many New Thought students are taught to give in order to receive. This will work to the degree that one believes in the principle and is open to Life. If one is not open to life, he can give to the point of personal exhaustion and never experience the promised blessings. A few years ago I visited a book publisher in Los Angeles and was given a tour through the warehouse. While there I chatted with the shipping clerk who said he knew of me through my books. He asked a question of me: "I've been sending money to an organization from which I receive

books and lessons and here is what I want to know. How long do I have to keep giving before I start experiencing prosperity?"

The moment we give in a constructive and unselfish manner, we are prospered. We are in the flow at that very moment. To give with the idea of eventual receiving is to expect to be in the flow in future-time. Right now, as we think loving thoughts, we are in the flow. Right now, as we inwardly bless others around is, we are in the flow. Right now, when creative ideas emerge, we are in the flow. Right now, when we open ourselves to Life, we are in the flow.

The key is *righteousness.* A righteous person cultivates the virtues and avoids thoughts, feelings, and actions which are not in accord with the highest ideal. Let us read from *The Book of Psalms* (37:25-35): "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

I have noticed that when we learn to give to Life our soul awareness increases and our trust in God is in greater evidence. Let us be realistic about our place in the scheme of things; we (you and I) are but single units out of billions upon billions of souls who are expressing in the universe. Outside of our dim memory of birth in this body . . . and our hopes for future experience, we know very little about this grand process which is unfolding about us. Being aware of this, why is it that we are so vain, so greedy, so selfish, so smug, and so anxious to prove that we have a right to do things our way? (Of course, I am not really speaking about you and me. I'm speaking about the "other fellow"!) It would seem that a little reflection would bring us to our knees, overcome with humility and repentance. How often, however, do we continue along our not-so-merry way hoping that things will get better . . . sometime?

Responding to the Inner Urge
to Become More Consciously Involved

The only way I know how to respond to the inner urge to become more consciously involved is to DO IT! One teacher gave a talk in which he shared a rather gruesome example, but he got his point across. He said, "I've been asked about just how to enter into complete involvement with the spiritual process. All I can say is that the best way is to make a radical change and enter fully into the process. After all, if you were going to amputate a person's leg, you wouldn't do it a few small slices at a time. You would perform the necessary surgery as efficiently and quickly as possible."

For many, the move from material consciousness (and the lifestyle which goes along with that level of consciousness) to the new life of full involvement with worthwhile principles is a dramatic change. A little change now and then may work for some, but the better way is to make a firm decision with high resolve and the utmost in confidence and then live from the level of soul awareness. If we cannot always succeed in living from the level of soul awareness, we can at least abide by the principles which are given us as guidelines in the great scriptures of the world. A key is this: the greater and more complete is our involvement with Life, the more fulfilled we are as spiritual beings and the more fulfilled we are as human beings.

Our giving, just like our praying, is best done privately and without public fanfare. We are working with God's will for mankind when we give wisely, and this process is not something to be overly discussed or commented upon by others who do not share our vision. Neither should we desire recognition for what we do *with* God. Nor should we expect God to do anything for us because we have opened ourselves to Life. Remember, the moment we are open it *is done unto us*. To expect God to take notice of our limited generosity is surely a selfish and small-minded attitude. God is our very life. God is the very life of each

living thing. Therefore, never let us think in terms of, "I'm helping you, God. Now I expect results!" We help ourselves to a greater awareness of God's reality when we open our minds and open our hearts.

Fulfillment is a Matter of Complete Surrender to God

Teachings for the benefit of seeking souls vary according to with whom the teacher is working and to the capacity of each student. Teachings also vary according to the level of understanding of the teacher; God has ways to bring teachers and students together who seem to need one another. For students who seem to require a magical formula, such instruction is available. By *magical* I refer to a special technique or method which is supposed to produce superior and fast results. We cannot underestimate the potency of "special methods" because of their sometimes usefulness. Some seekers are in a crisis-experience and are ripe for any technique which has worked for others. It often works for them, too, because they are on the very edge of breaking through to a new dimension of understanding. There are, also, those among us who are blessed with a simple faith and who do not complicate their lives with "reasons why" a process works. In recent years many doctors have come into the undertanding that the *placebo effect* is not always a matter of the patient's simple-minded trust in an authority figure. A *placebo* is a neutral "medicine" given to patients whose symptoms appear to be either mind-emotion oriented or who do not respond to conventional treatment. Thus, a harmless and non-effect-producing substance is offered in tablet form or by injection in order to "give the patient something" to aid him in handling distress. The patient may not be suffering only because he "thinks" he is suffering. He may be experiencing real discomfort. When he "believes" that he has been given a useful medicine to relieve his physical symptoms, his body often actually *produces* the chemical substances required to encourage healing.

Whatever outer thing we do that triggers faith in God is useful. Something will then happen on a deeper soul level. The outer ritual may be as simple as just getting up in the morning and saying, in the mind, "Thank you God for another beautiful day." Or, "This is the day the Lord has made. I now rejoice and I am glad." Or, again, "Every day, in every way, I am more and more conscious of God's good will for me and my world." Our daily routine may include the reading of a special selection from the scriptures or from a helpful book. Meditation is always of value, on a regular schedule. Our weekly or monthly financial involvement is a major influence to assist us to consciously know that we are fully participating. The ideal is complete, total, and final surrender to God's activity as we understand this activity.

To be superficial with God is to be ego-oriented. We have all played many roles in our various human relationships, but with God all roles must be dropped and all personal motives sacrificed on the altar where the living Reality exists. An *altar* is where man and God meet and where man sacrifices (gives up human consciousness) in order to allow the conscious activity that soul and God can know.

Here is something for us to contemplate:

"I surrender to God and, through this sacrifice of surrender, I become aware of my real identity. From this moment forward I will live my life as God intended. My way is the way of virtue and correct observance of the laws of nature. What joy I experience as I abide by natural laws."

"Because we are made in the image and likeness of God it is God alone Who is the influential power."

Chapter 13

The REALITY of God is Expressing *as* You *Now*!

Let us first examine the words of Paul the Apostle *(Philippians 2:3, 6)*: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." There is a truth-revealing message here for all of us.

Our central teaching is that God, the Oversoul, is all that is. The energy of God, directed by the intelligence of God, appears as nature and all forms in nature. Our physical body is formed of God-energy. Our mind is a part of God-mind. Our very being, as a soul, is an expression of God, as a wave is the expression of the ocean. There is no difference, in substance, between the wave and the ocean. The wave is on the surface, but it only exists because the ocean exists. As a wave cannot exist by itself, so we cannot exist by ourselves. God is actually expressing as you and as me now! The degree of clarity and power that God expresses in our particular instance is dependent upon the illumined brightness of our individual mind. This is why Paul admonished those whom he was instructing to, "Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Jesus, being fully enlightened, knew of his conscious relationship with God. He knew that the power and the wisdom he shared did not have a personal origin with his outer expression. He knew that to the degree that the sense of personal sense decreased, to that degree the expression of God would increase. How different this is from the sometimes efforts we make to acquire God-knowledge for personal ends. The average seeker, trying to increase his understanding in order to relieve himself of pressing burdens, does not have any idea what is really in store for him when he fully awakens and surrenders self-consciousness to God-consciousness. The destiny of every person is that of eventual awakening to the ultimate truth about the nature and activity of God.

We so often try, with desperation, to enter into an intimate relationship with God. What we sometimes forget is that God is our very being and God is trying to express through us in greater measure. This is where our personal discipline enters into the matter. When we do our part to remove restricting tendencies and patterns from the mental field, the soul nature can more easily express as it is destined to express. We already know the processes. We already know of the importance of honest self-analysis, mental and emotional discipline, prayer, meditation, and the contemplation of the nature of God. We know, if we have studied for a time, what we should to to be more open to the activity of God in our lives. The key, then, is to step out in a constructive direction in life and do what should be done in our own individual instance to allow the soul nature freedom to express.

God Can if We Will!

We do not have to do all of the work; God will do most of it if we begin well and allow the process to begin within us. The activity of God through us is a *process*, because needed inner change takes place once the deeper energies are awakened and begin to circulate. Superior soul

forces become stronger and stronger as we become more surrendered to the inner activity of God, and these superior soul forces cleanse and regenerate the inner parts of us, the mental field is cleared, the brain and nervous system are refined, and the body becomes a radiant vessel through which God-power flows.

We are here discussing deeper matters than positive thinking and regulating the mental attitude, as important as these matters are to health and function. We are here discussing the activity of the Holy Spirit in man. The Holy Spirit is the Intelligent-Directing Force in nature which regulates everything. It is responsible for all unfoldment and all needed transformation. True soul awakening is the result of this inner process becoming self-evident.

One might read all of the useful books on philosophy and metaphysics, and one might be adept in the practice of techniques of concentration and the control of mental processes, but if the soul influence is not present in one's life, then no real spiritual power is evidenced. The activity of God in man is the activity of the soul once it has been awakened. There have been people in whom soul force has awakened, but they were not educated and they were not practical in dealing with relative matters. The ideal, then, is for us to be educated and to be spiritually quickened so that constructive work might result in our lives.

Spiritual Realization and Useful Work Can Go Hand in Hand for Us

We cannot honestly affirm that we are too busy with our duties to give attention to matters of the soul. The ideal is to experience a blending of inner and outer activities in order to live a balanced life. Let us read from Chapter Three of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Krishna is giving instructions to his disciple, Arjuna: "In this world a two-fold way has been taught by me from times past, the path of knowledge for men of contemplation and the path of works for men of action. Not by abstaining from action

does a man obtain freedom from it, nor by mere renunciation does he attain perfection. For no one can remain, even for a moment, without doing some kind of work; every one is made to act by the impulses born of human nature. He who restrains his organs of actions but continues in his mind to brood over the objects of the senses, whose nature is deluded, is said to be a hypocrite and a man of false conduct. But he who controls the senses by the mind and without attachment engages himself in useful work, he is honest and superior in his conduct. Do the work before you, for this kind of action is better than inaction; even your body cannot be maintained without some form of action being taken. But work which is not done in the spirit of renunciation is binding; therefore work in the spirit of renunciation and become free from all attachment. Know that the origin of karma (cause and effect) is in the Divine Consciousness. Therefore the Divine Consciousness is in and through all useful work."

The world in which we live is the training ground for our higher understanding. We can easily determine how well we understand the nature of Consciousness by looking to our enviroment and living pattern. We are where we are in life because of our current level of understanding. An enlightened person may see the "facts" surrounding him when first entering a situation, but such appearances will change due to his understanding of inner causes which contribute to outer effects. Frequently, in the *New Testament*, we are reminded of how Jesus looked through the outer appearances and miracles resulted. Where there was water, wine appeared; where a dead man lay, new life was instilled in the body; where food was not adequate to meet a present need, it was multiplied to satisfy all requirements.

It is easy for us to exclaim, "Yes, but he was anointed of God!" The testimony of every great master teacher is that the life of one enlightened person is the example of what all can experience. It is a matter of correct Self-understanding and of being open to the flow of real power, the power of God through the soul level. Yes, it requires

faith to experience the activity of God through our lives. To have faith is to *see that which is true behind the temporary appearance-scene*. We are then able to call forth the ideal and see the temporary environmental appearance fade from view.

Almost every person can attest to occasions when dramatic change for the better was experienced as a result of believing in an ideal. The reason why many are not able to experience in this manner all of the time is that they do not remain clear and open. The activity of God does not express just now and then; the activity of God is expressing every moment . . . wherever it finds an outlet through which to move.

We are often inspired to be very specific relative to how we are going to use our ability in a constructive manner in our work. It is our responsibility to learn to use inner discernment in order to determine when to be specific and when to release a situation to Higher Knowing. One useful way to handle matters is to do the very best we know to do and then leave ourselves open to the unexpected blessings. Life has a grand design which is often obscured to us. Always, deep within us, there must be this inner knowing concerning the difference between personal will and God's will.

For instance, we may be asked to pray for the healing of another person. We may be asked to pray for a change in another person's circumstances. We may feel intuitively led to pray for specific and decisive results and our prayer does result in the desired effects. On the other hand, we do not always feel this inner certainty, but we feel obligated to pray anyway. What to do? In this latter instance we can pray for the spiritual awakening of the person in need and we can pray for the activity of God to be fully expressive in a manner which is most useful in the situation. Either way, we are contributing our supportive energies to the situation and only good can result from our participation.

To be effective in life it is essential that we rid ourselves of mental and emotional "baggage" which holds us down.

For many people, the first step in this direction is to study the basic principles until they are clearly understood. I am occasionally amazed when I meet a person who tells me he has been a truth student for many years, who is still not clear on the principles. It is not enough for us to be able to quote one presumed expert or another. The ideal is for us to embody the principles and prove them in our daily experience. Then it will not be a matter of what we think, it will be a matter of what we know . . . because we have tested the principles. Living the principles results in knowledge. Principles which are not experienced are but concepts in the mind and serve no transforming purpose.

An interesting symbol of spiritual purity which is used in India is that of the swan. The folk-tale is that the swan can extract milk from a mixture of milk and water. One who is spiritually pure, it is taught, lives in the world which is a mixture of influences but extracts only the divine essence and leaves the rest. A person might go into seclusion in order to escape "worldly" influences and still be captive to his own uncontrolled thoughts, feelings, and tendencies. On the other hand, a person might function freely in the world and be untouched by any unwanted influence. Since God is expressing as us now, wherever we are we can be aware of this happening if we are centered and conscious. When we are conscious of our real nature we need no defense against the world, we need no prayer for protection, we require no outer assistance in order to function in harmony with nature.

Awakening to the Activity of Grace

The principle of causation is one which we all have to learn at a certain stage of our unfoldment. To learn how causes result in effect is to gain insight into the processes of nature. To live in harmony with the law of causation is to experience a degree of freedom in the world. It is often an important discovery for a person to learn that he

can take control of his thoughts, feelings, and actions and actually take a hand in determining his fate. With an increase in understanding relative to the law of cause and effect, there should also be a corresponding moral elevation so that one who awakens to greater abilities is then naturally inclined to use them beneficially. The law of causation is impersonal; it will work for any person who uses it correctly, whether one's motive is constructive or destructive. This is why we should always be open to the inner guidance of the soul when using the creative laws of mind.

There is a higher law which we can experience and this is the law of grace in our lives. When we are open to the influence of the soul, we experience spiritual unfoldment and we find ourselves participating consciously with the process of world transformation. We experience wonderful things happening to us and around us which we did not cause to happen. When we are open to the activity of grace, a higher law is operative. The superior influence of God through and as us cancels out prior non-useful mental concepts and literally forces us into a pattern of living which is for our total good and where we can be of greatest value to the spiritual needs of humanity.

When we are open to the activity of grace in our lives we find that "windows" in the mind seem to open and we see possiblities we had not even thought about before. We also see how it is that we do not have to "hold a thought" to cause an effect; we have but to accept the possiblity of that which seems most appropriate and outer conditions adapt without personal struggle or undue effort. Working only at the level of mental causation, we are forever working at being successful and at being productive. Under grace we are in a creative flow which carries us along to our ultimate destination in God. When grace is flowing, the inner fires burn the seeds of destructive mental tendencies so that we experience purification. With the cleansing of the mental field, suppressed powers of intuition are

able to surface and the faculty of intelligence becomes keen.

When we function at a new level of understanding we also experience that the manner in which we approach a task is different from what it was when we were in the former level of understanding. We are more decisive and we make wiser use of energy and time. We are conscious that we are not really doing anything; it is God as us doing the work. It is also a common experience that, with a more cosmic awareness, most of the habits and tendencies which were once a challenge just seem to drop away by themselves. Tendencies and habits rooted in the soil of a confused mind cannot remain when we are possessed of that mind which was in Jesus and other illumined beings.

This is the challenge of the masters, that we be pure and enlightened. They do not teach that we should be merely good in order to inherit a future-heaven experience. They inform us that right here and now is our opportunity to come to terms with who we really are and what our relationship with life should be.

Spiritual Yearning is Evident Among People the World Over

As God awakens through more and more people on the planet, the true kingdom of fulfillment will manifest. I see the desire for spiritual awareness expressing through people all over the world. As we travel we do not find that language is a barrier to the transmission of Truth. Cultural roots are not a barrier, either, because what is occurring is soul-to-soul communication. God knows how to reach out and awaken Himself as the seeking soul. Words are important in the communication of these principles. Personal example is important also. The most potent influence, however, is the activity of God meeting seeking souls at their level of need.

Information about the nature of Consciousness has been made available for decades through the printed word

and through verbal instruction. What is needed now is a powerful infusion of God-consciousness into all teaching systems, because this alone will result in world transformation. God has a plan for mankind and God's plan is always on time. God is working and expressing as many enlightened people today and God will work and express through millions more in the years to come. This will come about due to spiritually responsive souls more fully surrendering to the inner process.

From the *New Testament* we read (Romans 12: 1, 2): "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." An altar is designated as a meeting place between soul and God. Our body is an altar where God as the soul awakens and becomes fully expressive. Our "reasonable service" is to sacrifice (renounce) all tendencies which prevent the expression of God through and as us. We are advised not to conform to opinions and concepts which prevail among those of this world but to be transformed as a result of mind-renewal.

This sacrifice requires a fully attentive attitude and a willingness to do what must be done. If we say that we desire a fuller, richer spiritual life and yet we persist in doing things which are not compatible with the higher ideal, we are obviously not doing our part. If we persist in playing the role of being weak when we know we should be strong, we are not doing our part. The truth of the matter is this: no one has ever given up restricting habits and connections without experiencing a far greater awareness of God! When we sacrifice (renounce) patterns which restrict soul activity, we are really gaining, because we are awakening to true freedom and true fulfillment.

Something Constructive to Do Right Now

If you have never done the following, do it now. Make a written list of all of the things you know you should do in order to participate with God's transforming process in you and as you. This will be your personal sharing with your inmost self, so keep it private. Learn to cultivate the virtues and eliminate the little time-wasting and energy-draining errors. Spend some time each day in quiet meditation; not working at it, but being open and responsive to inner guidance. Train yourself to be neutral in the face of challenge and negative conditions. Handle what needs to be handled with dispatch and calm inner assurance. If there are areas in your life which are in need of improvement, make a list right now of the constructive things you can and should do . . . and decide on a plan of intelligent action to move forward.

Writing your plans and decisions helps to confirm them in your mind and takes them from the realm of speculation into the arena of here and now involvement. Reading about the ideal life is only useful as motivation. Talking about the ideal life is usually a waste of time, except for those occasions of intentional instruction for others. The really important ingredient in the process is *conscious involvement.* Here is something to contemplate and realize:

> *"I am truly God expressing. I acknowledge this with every atom of my being. From this moment onward I consciously do what I know I must do to be open so that God can fulfill His intended will and purpose."*

". . . but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in God . . . ."
– Philippians 3:13,14

Chapter 14

CONSCIOUSLY DOING WHAT MUST Be DONE To ALLOW LIFE To EXPRESS HARMONIOUSLY And COMPLETELY

Allow me to recommend a simple exercise which can be useful for all of us. Take a few moments and think honestly about what you are doing with your life. Ask yourself this question: "How many years do I have in this present incarnation to fulfill the purpose for my being here?" We have a spiritual destiny and we have our present goals and programs to consider. Are we doing what we know we can do to experience the fulfillment of spiritual destiny, and are we doing what we know is necessary to reach our goals and to fully implement our personal programs? *Pause now and dwell on this matter.*

Many people in the world are lost in material consciousness and will not even think of the questions we have just asked of ourselves. But you are different because you are pondering the matter of soul awakening and personal fulfillment. It is not enough for us to have specific goals, we must do what must be done to enable us to reach these goals. Perhaps I should say *experience these goals* instead of *reach these goals* because the inner experiencing of goals

as though they were already present realities lends a considerable influence to the process of seeing them unfold. Too often we may think of goals as distant possibilities, with time and other barriers standing betweeen us and them. Time can be a factor because some events require duration in order to come together or unfold. Barriers, however, are often of our own mental construction. We often envision difficulties instead of possibilities. We often think in terms of overcoming resistance instead of releasing opposition. We often do not prepare ourselves ahead of time for the experience we affirm that we desire.

Our Environment Reflects Us

We can easily determine how well we are doing by examining our personal environment; the world we see around us on a daily basis. Is our world harmonious or is it chaotic? Is our world supportive or is it restrictive? Are we flowing along with ease or are we struggling? What is "out there," according to the masters, is a reflection of what is in the mind and consciousness of the individual. It is sometimes difficult to accept that we are the center of our personal world and outer inharmony is a corresponding reflection of inner confusion or unknowing. The seeming outer problem is never really a matter of another person, an unyielding situation, or the trend of current events. The seeming outer problem is always ourselves. Why is this true? Because with clear understanding we should know what to do to cope with challenge and to handle ourselves easily in time and space. When we decree the problem to be outside of ourselves we are affirming that we are not conscious enough to work from the level of soul understanding. Therefore, in this condition, we are not really spiritually free and possessed of real knowledge.

If we know what we should do, we have but to do it and fulfillment will be ours. Always, we begin with ourselves from where we are. How is our self-image? That is, what do we think and feel about ourselves? In our per-

sonal opinion are we all right? In our personal opinion do we feel we deserve happiness, health, mature relationships, and success in our ventures? Some may say, "I am not concerned with happiness, health, mature relationships, or success in worldly ventures because all I want to do is to realize God in this incarnation." The problem with this attitude is often that one's quest for God-realization is an escape from responsible involvement. If one were truly inclined in this direction one would forsake all outer relationships and give total attention to the process of God-realization. I see no reason why we cannot attend to our duties in a conscious and responsible manner even while we are intent upon enlightenment For most of us, our outer relationships are a direct reflection of how spiritually aware we are, because what we are inside is reflected outside. If we say we are students of this way of life and that God is our goal and we persist in having personal problems, we must not understand the philosophy well enough. When I refer to happiness, fulfillment, mature relationships, and the reaching of chosen goals, I am not referring to grasping at experience or sensation; I am referring to being open to the natural trend of Life to unfold and to complete its intended cycles.

Two Basics to Consider and to Remember

Here are two basic principles to examine (contemplate) and to remember always: Life tends to support creation and to maintain the natural processes; Life tends to express in the direction of fulfilling Its purposes. When we are in harmony with natural law we will be supported by Life and we will experience the fulfillment of our soul-directed purposes. Therefore it is actually easier to succeed than it is to fail. It is actually easier to experience health than it is to be diseased. It is actually easier to prosper than it is to be impoverished. Knowing these things to be true, isn't it interesting to be told of poverty, sickness, crime, and inharmonious relationships?

What, then, restricts the natural tendency of the soul to be conscious and in harmony with its destined purpose? Delusion and lack of understanding restricts this natural tendency. Even when lack of understanding is not the problem, the problem may be inertia or it may be fear of success. It may be that one's self-image is so poor that one consciously and subconsciously contrives to suffer and fail. We do not have to punish ourselves for past errors. We have only to do the best of which we are capable from this moment forward. In this manner, like Paul (*Philippians 3: 13, 13*) we "press toward the mark" and experience our ultimate good.

Setting Our Goals and Establishing Useful Priorities to Destined Ends

Are we sincerely inclined in the direction of experiencing enlightenment in this incarnation? The answer is within us; if we are sincere we will be doing what is required of us to allow the enlightenment experience. Are we sincerely inclined in the direction of Self-actualization and the fulfillment of personal duties? Again, the answer is within us (and around us), for if we are sincere we will be making necessary arrangements for the completion of projects and we will have established our priorities in order to focus attention and energy in the most result-producing channels and directions. *We succeed at ventures by paying attention to essentials and by removing all obstacles to success.* An *essential* thing is a necessary thing. *Obstacles* are conditions or things which prevent success or attainment.

Essentials – What do we have to know or do to experience the completion of our projects and the fulfillment of our purposes? We may have good intentions, but, if we are not possessed of the knowledge of how to proceed, we will have problems. When intention and purpose are wedded to knowledge and effective procedures, fulfillment is automatic. Therefore let us acquire sufficient

knowledge of our chosen area of involvement so that we know exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. If we need more information or education, we can acquire what we need. If we seem to need the ideas and the cooperation of others, this can be attracted into our lives. The energy of the universe is available to us once we are established in the clear understanding of what our purpose in life is and what is expected of us. To the degree that we open ourselves to this energy, it will find through us a corresponding outlet.

Obstacles – Most obstacles to success are within us; they are our thoughts, our attitudes, our beliefs, and our conditioned tendency in the direction of failure. This is why it is stressed that one should practice self-examination and come into an understanding of what needs to be changed or neutralized at deeper levels of mind and feeling. Why do we persist in thoughts, feelings, and actions which cannot contribute to our highest fulfillment? Why do we allow other people to manipulate us and interfere with our creative purposes? Why do we allow fear thoughts and trends in society to confuse us and thwart our purposes?

The media is featuring comments by "experts" and news of economic "evidence" to instill in the minds of those who will believe that the United States is experiencing a monetary recession. Honest reporters and sincere "experts" are but reporting the news from surface appearances. What is seldom said is that individuals determine outer circumstances. All who are attuned to the consciousness of society will experience what most people in that society experience. Those who are thus attuned will flow with trends and cycles, and they will be influenced by the collective thoughts, moods, and activities of society. The individual who is consciously awake to the truth about his relationship with God will not be affected by what is happening to the general population.

Remember our basic teaching relative to our relationship with our world? *What we experience is determined by*

our own state of consciousness and our responsible interaction with our world. If this is true, and it is, then this is a principle upon which we can rely always. That which *is so* (true) remains so regardless of any appearance to the contrary. There can be no exceptions to *that which is so* (true). Other people may experience restriction but we do not have to follow their example. We have a higher example before us as we contemplate the teachings of the enlightened masters of the ages. Poverty, disease, lack of soul knowledge . . . these conditions are common to man in traditional consciousness. Prosperity, health, and true understanding are common to all who are in harmony with Life.

Paramahansa Yogananda was once talking with a disciple who felt unable to live up to the highest ideal as taught. The disciple said, "Sir, you can do the things you talk about because you are a master!" Yoganandaji replied, "How do you think I became like I am? I am as you see me because I did what had to be done!" This is the message for all who are yet in training; one only experiences the ideal because of doing what must be done to allow it to express.

Allowing Life to Express, in Contrast to Causing Effects

We do have the capacity to cause effects in our world. We do have a responsibility to use our creative abilities wisely. But not all we experience is the result of our causing things to happen; much of what we experience, once we learn how to relax, is due to our learning to allow Life's natural inclination in the direction of completion to express through us and around us. This should be welcome news to any person who is tired of fighting, struggling, and forever trying to make things happen. Sometimes all we need to do is to catch the inner mental vision of what can be possible and then see it come into manifestation as a result of our total acceptance of it. Remember, we are living in a relationship to a responsive creative energy and the natural tendency in nature is for Life to support Itself.

What is it you want to experience? Is it greater understanding? It it better health? Is it improved relationships? Is it more evidence of prosperity? Then open the windows of your mind and begin to expect, accept, and then rejoice in the fact that your needs are now being met and your inspired desires are being fulfilled. As long as you are turning to the Source and resting upon the principle that Life will meet your every just desire, why not now accept total knowing, total health, open relationships, and total prosperity? In *Malachi*, the last book of the *Old Testament*, we read (3:1), "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now, herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Life wants to express through us and the blessings will flow when we open ourselves to the experience. To open ourselves we will have to make whatever mental adjustment is required to remove the inner restrictions.

As we practice with trust and expectancy we begin to experience that what the great prophets have taught is absolutely true. With experience our confidence increases, and, before long, we are living consciously out of a heavenly state of consciousness.

Some people will find that they seem to unfold in gradual stages, gaining more and more insight and learning to function more freely. Others will experience sudden and even dramatic awakening which results in total transformation in their lives as a result of their new and expanded awareness. To remain motivated on the path we recommend regular and surrendered study of the writings of the sages. Always, regardless of outer circumstances in the present, inwardly remain attuned to the great hero spirits through whom God has expressed so beautifully. Do not identify yourself with limitation or with people who are not Self-actualized. Even if you do not have an opportunity to personally associate with enlightened people, associate with their consciousness within your own

mind and heart. Behind every thought inwardly know, "God is my life. God is my life. God is my life."

There are subtle traps along the way for the unaware enlightenment student. These traps are always within ourselves, and outer occasions merely serve as opportunities for inner tendencies to manifest. Who has not, at one time or another, felt a faint glow of pride because of being "on the path" and because of having read so extensively of available philosophical books? Pride is evidence of ego . . . a sense of separation from the Source. Who has not, at one time or another, been consciously disobedient of the rules and guidelines which are part of nature's plan? Pride and disobedience, we are told, are two major errors which afflict even highly aware souls.

The guidelines shared by spiritual masters are for the purpose of easing our way through life. We can avoid much pain and confusion by consciously abiding by the rules which insure order and harmonious action. One useful experiment is to shift the mind into a neutral attitude for a few weeks and get above likes and dislikes relative to what is done. Then, during this experiment, just from curiosity, do what should be done in order to test the principles and examine the results. Enlightened teachers from various traditions teach the same basic principles; therefore they must know something that the average person does not know.

We do not abide by the basic principles in order to *become* enlightened. We abide by the principles as taught by the masters because they teach what they do because they *are* enlightened. When we flow effortlessly in harmony with natural law, we are then conscious and we experience that whatever we do is done in the best way to do it. I well recall an incident which occurred many years ago, to which I was a witness. I was visiting the headquarters building of the Self-Realization Fellowship to attend an annual conference. A few of the monks were asked to arrange chairs in the chapel so that the larger group that was scheduled could be comfortable. One of the older

residents was responsible for deciding the arrangement and she kept changing her mind. The chairs would be arranged and then moved to form another arrangement. Finally, one of the monks, who was becoming irritated at the process, turned to a senior brother disciple and said, "Doesn't this bother you?" To which the disciple remarked, "Why should it? I just do what I'm told."

We all have an inner guidance system which tells us, most of the time, the most useful way to live our lives. After a few years of spiritual education we know the basic principles and what is required of us to accomplish our purposes and to experience the highest end. It is true that many people have not been instructed, so they really do not know how to think, how to feel, how to act, and how to be open to God's influence. But you and I have had the opportunity to be informed, and it is, therefore, our personal responsibility to enter into a conscious experience with life and living. We cannot say that we do not know the way to freedom of soul. With knowledge there also comes greater responsibility. And, as we assume our duties and handle our responsibilities correctly, we acquire greater knowledge.

Something to Do After Meditation

After a duration of quiet meditation and just before coming fully out of the experience . . . pause at the transition phase and bring the meditation consciousness into a practical relationship with your mind and your body. This can be done in the following manner:

Acknowledge the Truth – Consciously acknowledge, "I am made in the image and likeness of God. All of the attributes and characteristics which are innate to God also are innate to me. I am changeless, I am forever conscious, I am endowed with endless energy." Rest for a few moments and let this be a real experience.

Relate to Your Mind – Know that you are superior to the mind you use but that your mind is a creative tool to

be used in harmony with God's mind. Accept full and total responsibility for how you use your mind: the thoughts you think; the mental attitude you maintain; and how to envision your near and distant future. Whatever mental tendencies or characteristics you recognize as not being useful or constructive, dismiss them and cease to allow them to influence your consciousness. Know, I am now possessed of the mind of Light . . . The Christ mind . . . the Buddha mind . . . the illumined mind."

Relate to Your Body – Feel the body inside and outside. Acknowledge that your body is the vessel through which you express and that your body is the soul's holy temple. Totally accept the fact that inner Intelligence can maintain the body in excellent condition and It can even heal any condition which has, up until this moment, been a problem. Know, "My enlightenment extends fully to the body, and my body is now glorified with the radiance of the soul's light."

Relate to Your World – Your world is the body of God. What an interesting experience to relate to God's body! Everything with which we deal in our daily experience is formed of the energy of God. Therefore God is everywhere we are, manifesting as the world. Feel comfortable with yourself and with your relationship with the world. Feel that the world is a friendly and supportive environment, which it really is. See all people as God in individualized expression and action and know that God wants to manifest harmony among all expressions of Himself. Feel and know that you are now in the flow of God's intention and energy and that you are participating with the natural plan.

Of course, the major portion of our day is given to work, routine, duties, and relationships. One's day cannot be reduced to a formula. The ideal, it seems, is to flow through the day and ever be inwardly conscious and centered. In this manner we can handle relationships, we can handle challenge, we can handle those occasional dull events, and we can see through it all an opportunity for

greater discovery. This side of the Transcendental Field (the Absolute Reality, Pure Consciousness, Being, the Void . . . these are words to refer to that which is beyond definition) the possibiilities of our experiencing are limitless, because the universe is so vast and the energy-expressions so complex. Contemplate the small world of bacteria and living organisms which the naked eye cannot even see and which we seldom ever think about! Contemplate the universe and the many galaxies and the billions of suns and stars (and the almost infinite possibilities for life-expression)! Contemplate the very real, personal, and subtle matter of how you can relate to God and to your immediate world. Contemplate what God would really like to do *through* and *as* you . . . if you were open to His influence. Perhaps you are already open to the influence. If so, you know it and you know what is expected of you to continue in that experience. Perhaps you are very close to the experience of being open to God's influence. If so, now is the moment to relax all attempts to make events occur and, instead, surrender to the inner activity of the soul.

Contemplate this:

"I am conscious, aware, and fully open to the activity of Life through and around me as It expresses harmoniously and completely."

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doeth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."
– Matthew 6:43

Chapter 15

The ONLY TRUE and LASTING BASIS UPON WHICH to PLAN and DETERMINE OUR LIVES

To begin this lesson I would recommend, as preparation, that you first read from the *New Testament*, verse 20 to 49 in the sixth chapter of *The Gospel According to St. Luke*. You might even want to study those verses and this lesson several times over the next few weeks. We sometimes read something worthwhile and then move on to other study material before we have gained the insight possible from a discerning examination of the earlier theme. In the verses recommended. Jesus is speaking very directly to his disciples and is explaining things which seem unreasonable to a person in ordinary (traditional) consciousness. But there is a reason for his teaching emphasis. Jesus obviously is speaking from a higher level of understanding, and he expects his disciples to examine what he says and to understand why he teaches as he does. If one can understand and put into practice what is here taught, one will not be weak; one will be truly strong because of living from the level of soul knowledge.

The Struggle Between Lower and Higher Impulses and Tendencies is Common to Every Person in the Material World

In every person there are conflicting tendencies and impulses. On the one hand, we are inspired from within to live in accord with the creative principles of nature. On the other hand, we are often beset by drives and instincts which tempt us to do what is commonly accepted as appropriate to survive in this world. We may even become aware of an inner urge in the direction of self-destruction. Or we may justify our reactions and attitudes by affirming that, after all, we are but human and this is how human beings relate to their world. But the masters advise us to relate to the world from the level of soul understanding. They tell us that if we can do this, we will experience true fulfillment even while we play out our role during this incarnation. In the *New Testament* lesson we are advised to see to our own inward purity rather than react to outer conditions. The instruction before us is that if we abide by the principles of enlightened living, our lives will be founded upon that which will forever be secure. If we do not abide by the principles of enlightened living, when the pressure is on, when the storms buffet us, we will be swept away. Perhaps we should think about this as we take up the challenge of truly responsibile living. Perhaps we should see clearly just what is the best way to live and then do what we can to express that kind of life.

How can we successfully resist the tendencies and impulses which we know are destructive? How can we learn to work in harmony with the uplifting tendencies which contribute to health and spiritual fulfillment? Here are some ideas:

Use Discernment and Follow Inner Guidance – Even when strong tendencies and urges begin to influence us, we can, with practice, use discernment so that we inwardly know what we should do. When we know better, we can

do better. Through calm analysis we can learn to see clearly the course of action which will be useful.

If Need Be, Provide a Supportive Environment – At times we can see that our environment is contributing to our weaknesses. That is, something in our environment may tend to reinforce destructive feelings and tendencies. If this is the case, we can avoid the environmental circumstances which encourage undesirable thought, feelings, and actions. This matter of environment may extend to our relationships. Perhaps other people contribute to our confusion or to our destructive impulses. They may not even be conscious of the role they play, and it may be that it is our reaction totally. Whatever we can do to encourage constructive ideas and mature response should be done.

Keep Attention and Vital Force Flowing Upward – As we remain inwardly aware of the truth of our soul nature and as we aspire unto clear awareness, we find that our attention is naturally inclined to "rise above" all that contributes to unknowing and inertia. There is an elevating trend in nature and there is a trend in the direction of dullness and unconsciousness. As we remain attuned to the elevating trend, we soon experience that the influence of the trend in the direction of unconsciousness is being neutralized. This is why meditation is so useful; correct meditation practice keeps us aware and open to superconscious influences and it contributes to the upward flow of vital force. When the vital forces in the body are too strongly identified with the senses, we tend to be materialistic because we tend to think of ourselves as being a physical body only. When the vital forces are encouraged to flow upward in the direction of the brain centers, we experience a loosening from body-identification. We do not become other-worldly, but we are able to live with understanding because we are aware of the true inner nature as well as our relationship, through the body, with the world about us.

There are several ways we can keep our thoughts moving in a positive and useful direction. Some like to

start the day with meditation and prayer, and I strongly recommend this practice. Even a few moments before the bathroom mirror, looking at our reflection and purposely adjusting the mental attitude, can be useful. Sometimes a phrase will do it; we can inwardly know, "This is the day the Lord has made; I rejoice and I am glad!" Perhaps the reading of some inspirational material, from your favorite scripture or from whatever source, will be all that is needed to awaken the soul nature and keep you balanced for the remainder of the day. Affirmation, from time to time throughout the day, can be useful. One can inwardly know, "I am made in the image and likeness of God. God is my support and forever companion." Such affirmative thoughts contribute to soul awakening and tend to resist and neutralize tendencies and urges which are not compatible with our highest ideal. My guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, used to say, "I stress plain living and high thinking." He often made up new words when it suited his needs. In order to refrain from debate, for instance, in the matter of whether one should be a vegetarian or not, he would say, "I teach *propereatarianism.*" In other words, one was best advised to eat properly and in accord with the body's true needs.

We are all a mixture of the human nature and the divine reality. This is the reason for the challenge which confronts every person on the face of the earth. Some enlightenment teachers move through *their world* and give the impression that they are aloof from relative influences. I know better because I know them, I know myself, and I know the nature of Consciousness . . . which is both Transcendental as well as relative (manifesting as nature). I am aware of many enlightened teachers who do live in the steady inner understanding of their true nature and their relationship with God who, also, are not always attentive to body needs such are rest, correct diet, and enough time alone. It is possible for an enlightened person, because of compassion for others, to become drawn into the emotions and personal problems presented by seekers on the path. We

read of how Jesus frequently absented himself from the company of men and went into seclusion to pray. We need not feel guilty because of our occasional lapses in discipline. This is normal until we are firmly established in the current of God which carries all impulses and tendencies in the direction of full perfection.

Even advanced meditators, for instance, often experience occasions of difficulty in concentration and contemplation. The ideal is to never despair but to persist with patience and surrender to the God-nature within, the soul awareness. In due time, soul influence will resist, restrain, and neutralize restless mental tendencies. The victory goes to those who never give up and who apply themselves with diligence to a correct and useful course of action and involvement. Experience is the only proof of any method or system. One may read about the process and one may think and talk about the process, but only experience will yield insight and true realization. To realize a thing is to know it through experience.

The Love of God Carries Us Into the Stream of Grace

Does God actually love us? If so, how does God love us and what happens when we are open to God's love? A favorite verse of many Christians is found in the *New Testament* (St. Johm 3:16) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is the inner (esoteric) meaning of this verse?

There is a transcendental aspect of God which is aloof form the world process. It must be aloof and not involved because it is transcendental. But there is the aspect of God which is fully involved with the world process. This aspect is the Christ Consciousness, the Intelligence which directs the universe. When this Intelligence is involved with the universe It is referred to as the Holy Spirit. Because we are units of God (souls) we possess the same characteristics

that God possesses. An aspect of our inner nature is Being, and we experience this during peak experiences, whether meditating or not meditating. There is an Intelligence aspect to the soul, which is the same as the Intelligence aspect of God. Therefore Christ Consciousness is resident in each one of us. When this aspect of the soul is quickened and becomes more influential, then the Christ is again born in man. When the human mind is anointed of God, then Christ reigns supreme. Christ Consciousness, being a positive directing influence, is referred to as the Son of God. The son of man is the soul identified with conditioned mind.

The Christ Consciousness aspect of God was imparted to the Godhead and involved with the world process in order that Intelligence might direct universal activity. To "believe" in the Christ Consciousness means to *experience* this aspect of our nature. No soul can perish, but souls can remain unconscious for a long duration of time. When we awaken to the awareness of our Christ nature, we are liberated from bondage because we are free from darkness and error.

The love aspect of God is the magnetic attraction of God which pulls all creation back to the original starting condition. When we are surrendered to this attracting influence we are spiritually awakened, cleansed, and transformed. Literally, when we are surrendered to this attracting influence, the soul nature is unveiled and the organs of direct perception (discernment and intuition) are revealed. This is why it is taught that if any person be in Christ (Consciousness) he is a new creature and old things are passed away. When we are open to the attracting influence of God, the love of God, we are carried into the stream of grace and then almost all effort goes from our lives. There will be inspired activity, but there will be little effort.

There is an intentional influence in the direction of world transformation moving through the universe. This is referred to as "the way of righteousness." The Sanskrit

word for this process is *dharma*. This refers to the supportive influence which upholds and maintains creation. This supportive influence upholds and maintains us when we are open to its influence. To be open to this influence we have but to put ourselves into harmony with it. By doing our part, God does all the rest.

Abiding by the Principles of Creative Living Even When Not Naturally Inclined

It is natural to abide by the principles of creative living when we are partially awakened and it is *normal* not to abide by the principles when we are in conditioned consciousness. What can we do? We might say, "It is not normal for me to the live the way I know I should live because my conditioned inclinations are contrary to the ideal." When we know the way but do not feel inclined to follow the way, we can, at least, exercise determination and make ourselves do what we know is the highest and best. In this manner we neutralize inertia and impulsive behavior and give ourselves the opportunity to experience how it can be to abide by the most ideal principles. We are not suggesting hypocrisy, we are suggesting an intelligent and well-planned effort to live according to the highest ideals of which we are aware.

We can train ourselves to monitor our thoughts, mental attitudes, and feelings. We can train ourselves to respond appropriately to others and to unexpected challenge. We can enter into a program of study and regular meditation because we inwardly know it will be useful to do so. We can assume the virtues even if they are not now common to us. By living as we feel we must one day live, we give ourselves the opportunity of personal experience, and this experience will neutralize negative and destructive tendencies and patterns. By consciously going against the trend of unconscious and mechanical habits and instincts we force inner confrontation, and this results in awakening and soul unfoldment.

Instead of indulging in moods and occasions of despondency we can take command of feelings and attitudes and change our point of view. By assuming ourselves to be the person we really can be, we bring this experience into fruition. Intentional action will reinforce a change in attitude and feeling. We have all noticed that mental and emotional states usually reflect in facial expressions and body posture. Often, merely by smiling and standing tall we contribute to an immediate change of mood and feeling. By putting our environment in order and by planning specific goals we can experience renewed enthusiasm for living and a more conscious relationship with people and the world.

A change in diet may be in order. Are we eating "whatever comes our way," or are we consciously selecting our diet in an intelligent manner? A move from heavy foods to lighter and more nutritious foods can not only reinforce our intention to live in harmony with natural laws but can contribute to health of body and to clear and intelligent thinking. Perhaps the body is toxic and in need of cleansing. If so, why not intentionally eat fruits and vegetables for a few weeks and allow the body to be cleansed? When the body is healthy we think more clearly and our appreciation for life increases. Read our book *Health, Healing & Total Living* for general dietary suggestions. Never go to extremes. Let your inner feeling and health-response be your guide always.

Seeing to appropriate body weight is useful also. If one is overweight, an intelligent program of weight reduction would be an excellent project and an exercise in self-discipline. If one is underweight, one can handle this situation by careful attention to diet and exercise. Sometimes the body needs to be correctly balanced and a series of chiropractic adjustments may be just the solution to the problem. Injury to the body, stress, internal conflict, and less than ideal posture can contribute to body imbalance.

Are we afraid to make contact with our world? Are we reluctant to interact and handle ourselves in a responsible

manner? Here, then, might be a useful area to examine. Through practice and participation we can learn how to wisely function in our world and how to get along well with people as well as how to handle ourselves in relationship to different environments. With practice we can learn to intelligently handle the "stuff" of this material world, without grasping at it and without being afraid to deal with it. With practice we can learn to live freely in a benevolent and supportive universe. Remember, the universe is benevolent and it is supportive. It is the natural tendency of Life to prosper: to thrive, to flourish, and to be successful. To be successful means to fulfill purposes and accomplish intended projects. Are we thriving? Are we flourishing? Are we successful? We should be able to respond in the affirmative to these three questions. If we cannot, then we need to do something about our thinking, feeling, action and interactions.

Cooperating with the Cosmic Soul . . . Our Larger True Self

The masters teach that one of the reasons for human unhappiness is that many people are working hard at self-fulfillment and personal happiness. The problem here is that the average person feels himself to be isolated from God, the Cosmic Soul. How can such a person experience true happiness? It is impossible, of course. However, when we learn to cooperate with the Cosmic Soul (God), which is really our grand True Self, we find that our awareness expands beyond narrow interests and we become participants in the major activity of God, which is the transformation of the world. By this participating we become co-workers and companions with God. We cannot be a co-worker and a conscious companion if we are forever thinking of what we can get from God or what God can do for us. Self-realization is not selfish-realization because, when we know the true Self, we know our real nature and we know our relationship with God. When we know our

relationship with God we see to our duties and personal responsibilities, but we also work for the overall good of mankind and the planet. Therefore let us think about how we might make some useful contribution to others and our world. By *useful* I mean, let us think about how we might contribute to the enlightenment of others and our world. Let us know, consciously:

> *"I am truly an extension of God, working through this mind and body. I am now consciously aware of my personal responsibility to flow with God's good will and to consciously participate in the enlightenment of the world. I am thankful for this understanding."*

"For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad."

– St. Luke 8:17

Chapter 16

The SUBTLE LAWS Of MIND And CONSCIOUSNESS

One definition of *subtle* is: "that which is difficult to perceive or understand." Subtle influences invade our mind constantly, and what is not generally known or accepted is that our own subtle influences invade the mental sphere of the world in which we live. We live in an ocean of mind-substance, the mind of God. We also use a minute portion of this mental field and this is known as our own mind. Through the agency of mind we participate with the activity of life.

Whatever is within our mind, unless it is modified or neutralized, tends to externalize. This is why it has been said that nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest. Even that which seems now hidden will express outwardly or come abroad. For decades teachers of the New Thought movement have been writing and speaking of the law of mental correspondence: that which is within tends to express without. Understanding this law we clearly see how our thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes determine to a great extent our daily experiences. A hope, a dream, a mental picture, a desire tends to manifest because our

mind is a part of the greater mind of God. All truly creative people understand that hopes and dreams often come true. Our expectations, even expectations of accident, illness and failure, tend to manifest because the law of mind operates regardless of whether the mental pictures and the inner hopes are constructive or destructive. And the mental law is no respecter of persons; the law will work for anyone who knows how to use it. The law is operational even if one does not consciously know how to use it constructively. Even that which we fear can come upon us because of expectancy. By training ourselves to expect only the useful and the constructive experiences we can, to a degree, alter our personal fate.

Our fate has to do with what we are likely to experience in the near or distant future, depending upon our mental conditionings and expectations (often at a deeper level, below the threshold of conscious awareness). If what now motivates us and if what now is already a cause in the direction of a future effect is not altered, we are fated to experience according to present internal causes. We are not victims of present mental causes; we can alter present mental causes and, therefore, change our fate. If we do not believe this, if we cannot accept it, if we will not change present causes, we are sure to fulfill mental-cause prophecy. It is fairly easy to predict our own future (or the future of another) once present mental-causes are known. The only thing that can change the currently planned-future is to change causes, attitudes, and expectations. When one is caught in a mental, emotional, or environmental trap, it is often difficult for that person to see any possibility of a different way of living and experiencing. Most people, unless they have a very negative self-image and feel a need to be victimized, do not want to suffer or to experience restriction or limitation. Such people may want to experience a better way of life, but they do not know what to do to change the trend of events. Sometimes a crisis will force personal change. Sometimes personal desperation will force inner change. Sometimes a decision

to change will bring forth useful ideas and supporting experiences. Sometimes, even when we are at our wit's end as to what to do, the unexpected occurs and God's grace intervenes.

When we speak of God's grace we enter into the area of soul destiny. It is the destiny of every soul to awaken and to know permanent freedom in God. Many people have experienced dramatic change for the better in this life, even when they were not consciously thinking of a change, because of the urge of the soul to awaken and be clear and free. Others, not knowing where to turn or what to do, have thrown themselves upon the mercy of God and surrendered self-will completely. Such persons have experienced that when they give up ego-motivated will, a higher Power begins to work out their salvation. One is "saved" when one no longer experiences any compulsive need to conform to the patterns of conditioned mind. When one is in bondage to mental, emotional, and environmental conditions, then one is in need of being saved from such restricting influences. To "overcome the world" is to overcome the influences which incline the soul in the direction of limitation and unconsciousness. The masters affirm that they have overcome the world. That is, they are no longer at the mercy of inner tendencies and forces and they are no longer victimized by thoughts and energies extant in the world mind.

Soul-Realization is Superior to Mental Causes

Never let anyone tell you that you are the victim of mental conditionings. Never let anyone tell you that you are the victim of world consciousness. Many people suffer from the illusion that they must "pay off their karma" and that they are bound to flow with the current of world consciousness and experience severe challenge and personal limitation, Karma refers to cause and effect and has to do with both the mental laws and the laws of conscious-

ness. If we do not change the conditionings of the mind, if we do not alter our state of consciousness (our level of awareness), we are sure to experience according to what are now the motive patterns. If we will not neutralize existing destructive drives, if we will not awaken to a more clear level of awareness, we will surely continue as we have been. This is the law of mind and consciousness and it is an exacting principle.

God is superior to the world He produced because God is the active agent seeing to all world processes. The soul (you and I), when fully conscious, is superior to mind and the physical environment. It is weakness for us to affirm that we cannot regulate mental processes, that we cannot control our emotions, that we cannot be even and calm in the face of unexpected challenge. Whatever we affirm becomes true for us. If we affirm, "I cannot help it," this is then the law of experience for us. If we affirm, "I am in command of mental states, emotional response, and personal response," this is then the law of experience for us. We are in command, if we decide to be. Through patient and steady practice we can experience mastery over mental states and emotional and environmental response. A secret is this: never give up and never become frantic because of seeming lack of success. Be patient and, in due time, the lower impulses will be controlled and regulated.

Regular practice of meditation is one of the most useful processes we can experience. Not only does regular meditation result in deep relaxation but, when we rest in Pure Awareness, superconscious (soul) forces infiltrate mental levels and actually "burn out" the seeds of potential future destructive happenings. I am aware that many people report that they find it difficult to experience success in meditation. This is often because they are trying too hard for expected results. If one will follow the routine, with no expectation of results, in due time there will be the experience of peace, calm, and inward soul satisfaction. The idea is not to struggle with the meditation process. Just meditate as you would practice any daily exercise. Let the process

run its own course. There is an intelligence within each of us that knows how to see to meditation success. All we have to do is to surrender to it and then flow with the process.

And When we Pray . . . .

When we pray, let us pray in secret. That is, let us pray within ourselves, in a mood of quiet inner attunement with God. We are advised by the masters that whatever we ask of God, if it is in harmony with the way of righteousness, will be given to us. The way of righteousness is the way of harmony and orderly unfoldment for all who are involved in any process. It is all right to ask for spiritual freedom. It is all right to ask for knowledge. It is all right to ask for mental and emotional peace. It is all right to ask for health of the body. It is all right to ask to prosper: to thrive, to flourish, and to be successful. Such requests are in harmony with the way of righteousness because it is the natural inclination for Life to be fulfilled and to express easily and bountifully.

Many prayers are not answered because the one who prays does not ask in the conscious awareness of his relationship with God. Even "begging" prayers are sometimes answered; how much more, therefore, will prayers-with-understanding be answered? One can pray with a surrendered attitude, being open to whatever Life wants to unfold, in proportion to personal requirements and in harmony with personal soul destiny. One can also pray with authority, that is, one can pray with understanding and claim that which is useful and appropriate and in harmony with the ideal of Life's natural inclination to unfold and express without restriction.

When we pray in secret, alone with God, we know when the Power of God is beginning to move because we have an inner feeling-sense of fulfillment and gratitude. This inner feeling-sense of "all rightness" is a clue to us that we have prayed correctly and completely. When we

pray we can first pray for an intimate experience with God. This is the most direct and most pure way to pray. After we have rested in the conscious realization of our identity with God for a while, it may be that no prayer for outer effects is necessary. It may be that we are then so established in God-realization that circumstances will unfold in perfect proportion without our having to take any conscious thought. Or we may be inspired to be more specific as far as visualizing, planning, and then deciding upon a practical course of action.

Our prayer life cannot be reduced to a mechanical formula because each of us has a personal understanding of our relationship to God. One thing is essential, however, and that is the necessity of sustaining God-consciousness after our occasion of meditation and prayer. We do not want to come from prayer and immediately revert to an attitude of being restricted and limited. We want to come from prayer and maintain that joyous mood of "all is well."

How to Remain Steady on the Spiritual Path

How does one remain steady in faith even during occasions of lack? In other words, sometimes one is in the flow and everything works beautifully, and, at other times, even when we seem to be in tune with Life and we seem to be doing everything in the same manner, the flow seems to be interrupted. What to do during those occasions of "nothing is happening?"

It may be that one is not aware of existing subtle influences at deeper levels of mind and consciousness. One may be, on the surface level, observing the rules of thought, feeling, and conduct but, at a deeper level, be believing and expecting limitation, challenge, and difficulty. Or it may be that one is in harmony on all levels and that everything is as it should be in mind and consciousness. In the former instance one will have to practice self-examination

to become more aware and to understand the workings of deeper mind-causes. In the latter instance one can relax and be patient, knowing that in nature there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping, a time for planting seeds and a time for harvesting the results of growth and unfoldment. The idea is not to be impatient as long as one is surrendered to God and as long as one is in harmony with the laws of mind and consciousness. To become upset, to become fearful, to react emotionally to outside appearances is to revert to human (conditioned) consciousness. Are we firmly decided upon a God-inspired course of action, or are we going to slip back and forth between God-inspired living and personal weakness and limitation?

One of the reasons for instability on the path is that one may not be attending to a regular program of study, prayer, and meditation. Or it may be that one is well-involved but is working from a sense of ego, from a sense of "I am doing thus and so." In the latter instance we are prone to say, "I prayed and God gave me what I wanted!" Or we may say, "I prayed and nothing happened. There must be something wrong with me or with the so-called principles of mind and consciousness!" When we are working from the level of ego (the sense of being apart from God) we think in terms of "God and me" instead of "God *as* me." The ideal is to turn the attention to God and enter into a conscious understanding of the nature of Self as God (soul as God). Then whatever we ask in prayer is sure to be outwardly expressed. Or we may not pray at all, we may be content to flow with whatever is unfolding because we see this as our soul destiny. When one is flowing with the ever-unfolding pictures of life one is inwardly serene because one understands what is happening.

A common question is whether one should pray for results or whether one should wait for life to unfold. This can only be a matter of inner guidance. If one feels led to pray for outer results, this guidance is from the soul level. If one feels led not to pray for outer results, this guidance is also from the soul level. What is needed, of course, is

the ability to inwardly discern what is true guidance as in contrast to that which is either personal will or fear to take personal responsibility for decisions and actions. If our ego-sense is compelling us to cause things to happen, we certainly want to neutralize this tendency. If, on the other hand, our reluctance to "ask" in prayer is due to our unwillingness to assume the responsibility for so doing, we should examine why we are unwilling to consciously participate in Life's plan. We notice, in the lives of the masters, that they sometimes would "speak the word" and intercede on behalf of a person in need. They sometimes would alter the course of human events by introducing new subtle causes into an ongoing process. At other times, they would do nothing to effect outer change if they felt what was unfolding was a matter of destiny and that there were lessons to be learned by people involved in the process.

A sure way to remain steady on the path is to be ever reminded, "Pure Consciousness is my true and changeless nature." How can one who is established in the realization of Pure Consciousness ever be unsettled or insecure? How can one who is established in the realization of Pure Consciousness ever be out of the flow? If one cannot be clearly aware of the Truth of his real nature, let him surrender to God and trust God implicitly. When surrendering to God one gives God total control in the quiet assurance that God knows what is best always. The ego "I" will ever be insecure, the true soul "I" will ever be inwardly content. The soul nature is God-individualized; thus, when we know our nature as soul we are fulfilled.

Let me share with you something I do when I write articles, book material, and even advertising copy for our books and services. I approach each opportunity as an exercise in discernment and as an occasion for greater personal insight. I write "to" the potential reader, but I do not write "down" to that reader. I adjust my viewpoint so that I see as clearly as I can, for that duration, just what it is I want to share. I open myself to what God wants to share. I endeavor to share what seems clear and

useful as clearly and usefully as I can. In this way, each occasion of sharing becomes a conscious-meditation-realization-experience for me. I also do this when I speak during lectures, classes, seminars, or in interviews with the media. My only thought during such occasions is that personality will be almost-absent and that God will be predominant. I say almost-absent because God cannot express if there is no person through whom to express, at least through the written or spoken word. God expresses through all of nature, but God specializes through Himself as souls. When God wants to speak or write, He does it through expressions of Himself, as souls using minds and bodies.

When we are conscious of being instruments through whom God expresses, we can still allow God to express through personality as long as ego is absent. The more ego, the less of God expressing. Even enlightened people are aware of the various appearances of God (God expresses through and as all forms for the purpose of sharing Himself). Jesus said "I of myself do nothing. The father within, he doeth the works." Even at the subtle level of soul-realization there is the understanding that the soul seems to be distinct from God but is not really separate from God. If a wave could only know, it would know it but seemed to have individual reality, while at the same time knowing its seeming individual reality was made possible by that which gave it true form. We are all waves on the ocean of God-consciousness. God is the only Reality, we are but seeming individualized expressions.

There is no individual person in the universe because God is the life and reality of all beings. A major error is to believe that we have individuality apart from God. Most human problems (and consequent suffering) are due to the fact that most people think of themselves as distinct individuals and they are trying so hard to see to their personal happiness and fulfillment.

There is no real problem in the matter because God will see to it that everything turns out as it is destined. Here and there we will see evidence of personal suffering

because of inner confusion, but this is temporary and is only due to lack of knowledge of what is so. The sooner one turns to God the sooner there will be an end to personal pain. This is the teaching of the masters of the ages, and it will continue to be the teaching of the masters until the last seeking soul is awakened and knows the truth.

Do Not Fear Personal Responsibility and Creativity

As waves on the ocean of God-Consciousness we are here to allow God to do what God wants to do. If we truly feel inclined in the direction of responsible creative activity, then God will work through us and as us. In all matters, do not fear. Give even your fear to God and in this manner a greater understanding of your relationship to God and the world will come to the surface of your mind. Then God through your mind will move in useful ways. Even while this God-process is taking place we may be aware of "human" characteristics and challenges. This is but a time of cleansing and purification, and everything will be taken care of in due time. Whenever we are aware that God's influence is on the scene, we can be assured that everything will work out in perfect order and harmony. (There is something else I would like to share, about writing and speaking. When the conditioned-mind is out of the way, then the writing-speaking process flows and one is aware that he is but the conduit through which the message comes forth. We have all experienced this process when we have slipped into pure inspiration and Life is doing what Life wants to do.)

Our personal experience is a reflection of mental conditions and states of consciousness. Even though mental conditions may be hidden from others and hidden from ourselves, these conditions tend to externalize. What we really are, as far as our state of consciousness, is a superior influence always. When we are established in the awareness of our true (soul) nature, even mental conditions are neu-

tralized. If we do not change mental conditions and our state of consciousness, we will continue as we have been until change is experienced. If we are established in soul awareness now, and, if this awareness is maintained, our future experiences will continue to be harmonious and in line with perfect order or the way of righteousness.

It matters not how long we have persisted in negative thinking or feeling; as soon as we make needed inner changes we will see immediate outer effects. Through patient practice and clear discernment we learn to see the specific relationships between causes and effects and we learn to understand the subtle laws of mind and consciousness. Here is something to clearly realize:

> *"I am made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore I easily discern the truth about the laws of mind and consciousness. From this moment onward I assume full responsibility for mental conditions and my outlook upon life. I am open now to the activity of God's grace."*